MY SECOND CHILD BY NATURAL CHILDBIRTH by Mrs. Robbins

Modern Romances

March 15¢

• A DELL MAGAZINE • A DELL MAGAZINE • A DELL MAGAZINE • A DELL MAGAZINE •
DELL

THAT FATAL RIDE

NO WEDDING NIGHT FOR ME

ONE KISS FOR PAY

I'M THROUGH WITH HATE

CABIN DATE

Skin that says "I do!"

A softer, clearer skin is yours with your First Cake of Camay!

This lovely Camay Bride is
MRS. JULES ALEXANDER, the former Jean Pugsley of Rochester, N. Y.

Even the color camera can't do justice to Jean Alexander's vivid coloring—her dark hair—her hazel eyes. Yet, the feature that holds your gaze is Jean's complexion. Her *first cake* of Camay gave it a new and captivating smoothness!

"Camay's a heavenly beauty soap," she exclaims. "Why, my skin grew smoother, fresher, softer with my *first cake* of Camay!"

This bride's beauty treatment can reward you, too! Your *first cake* of Camay will bring new beauty. Change to regular care...use gentle, rich-lathering Camay alone. Use no lesser soap than Camay—and you'll soon have a smoother, clearer skin.

Lovelier shoulders—lovelier you!

Bathe with Camay, too—give your arms and legs and shoulders Camay's gentle care. With the daily Camay Beauty Bath, you're lovelier from head to toes—touched with Camay's flattering fragrance.

Camay—all that a beauty soap should be!

Camay's so mild—so quick with its gentle lather! And the "Beauty-Bath" size is Camay at its luxurious best. Big and economical—that's the size of it! More rich lather—that's the beauty of it!

Camay

the Soap of Beautiful Women

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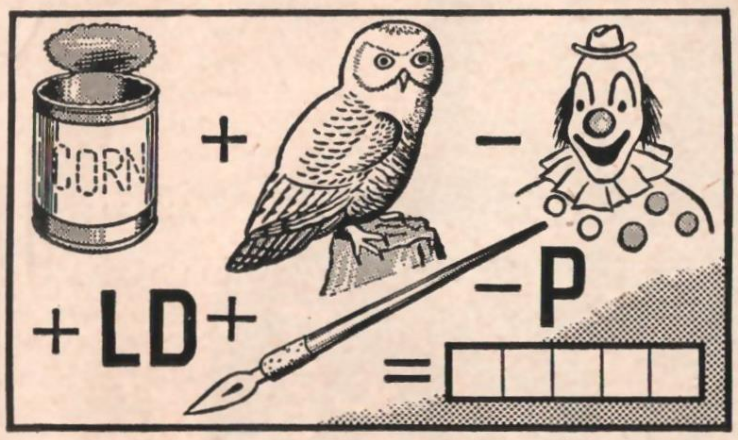
Win $102,500.00 FIRST PRIZE!

$25,000.00 2ND PRIZE – $10,000.00 3RD PRIZE
$167,500.00 In All – Must Be Won!

CAN YOU SOLVE PUZZLES?

THIS IS THE KIND OF PUZZLE IN THIS CONTEST

The solution to the puzzle below is the name of a Pilgrim Father who came over on the Mayflower in 1620.



How You Solve This Sample Puzzle

First of all, note that there are a CAN, OWL, CLOWN and PEN in this puzzle. Note also that there are some letters of the alphabet. There are also some plus and minus signs, which mean that you are to add and subtract. To solve the puzzle, write down the letters CAN. Next, add OWL, giving you a total of CANOWL. Next, subtract CLOWN, which leaves you with A. Then add LD, giving you ALD. Next, add PEN, giving you ALDPEN. Next, subtract P, leaving you with ALDEN, which is the solution.

HERE! Today! RIGHT NOW! is the golden opportunity of your life! Read the facts on this page, examine the list of prizes, study the puzzles, and THEN! mail the coupon in the lower right corner of this page. This coupon will bring you–ABSOLUTELY FREE –the complete details, official rules, first Puzzle-Quiz, Entry Form – everything you need in order to be in position to ENTER THE CONTEST IMMEDIATELY!

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Do you want to win a FORTUNE! – $102,500.00–ALL IN ONE LUMP SUM! – YES! $102,500.00, a fortune big enough to make you independently wealthy for life! . . . and notice the other prizes listed in the panel at the right! $25,000.00 as 2nd Prize! – $10,000.00 as 3rd Prize!–210 cash prizes totaling $167,500.00! EVERY PENNY OF THE HUGE PRIZE FUND MUST BE PAID TO WINNERS.

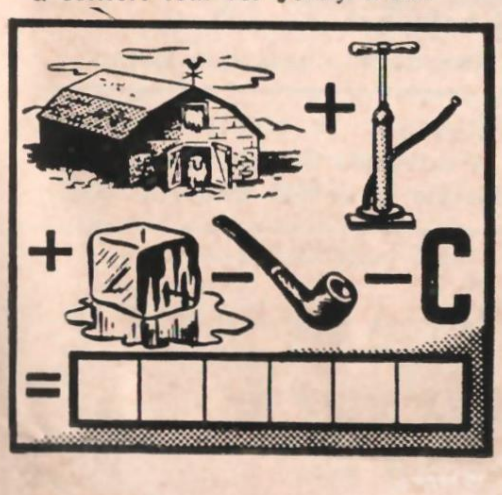
FIRST PRIZE	**$102,500.00**
SECOND PRIZE	**$25,000.00**
3rd Prize	$10,000.00
4th Prize	$5,000.00
5th Prize	$3,000.00
6th Prize	$2,500.00
7th Prize	$1,500.00
8th Prize	$1,000.00
9th Prize	$1,000.00
10th Prize	$1,000.00
11th through 110th Prizes, each $100	$10,000.00
111th through 210th Prizes each $50.00	$5,000.00
Total Prizes	$167,500.00

Here Are Some of the ACTUAL Puzzles

See if you can solve them. Find out right now how much you'll enjoy this contest. Then mail the coupon at once!

The solution to the puzzle below is the name of a Gulf State of the United States.

Solution is the last name of an American showman who arranged a concert tour for Jenny Lind.



Why We Are Giving This Fortune in Prizes

This contest is presented to the contest fans of America by one of the world's largest and most famous book-publishing companies, Unicorn Press – publishers of the world's greatest and newest encyclopedia for home and family use, The New Funk & Wagnalls Encyclopedia. It is a contest of *skill*, and the prizes will be won by *point scores* alone, not by chance or whim of judges! Yes! the solution to each puzzle can be VERIFIED, because the editors built this fascinating contest right out of the pages of their encyclopedia which contains the facts from which to verify the solutions to the puzzles.

Million-Dollar Advertising Campaign

This contest is part of a MILLION-DOLLAR advertising and publicity program to publicize, popularize and dramatize our new, wonderful reference work and to make it the most talked-about, best-loved and most widely-used encyclopedia in the world.

Study The Sample Puzzle

Notice the SAMPLE Puzzle printed in the upper left corner of this page. Read the explanation below the Sample puzzle. Learn how the Sample Puzzle is solved! Would you enjoy solving puzzles like this, giving yourself a chance to win a fabulous fortune! NOW! see if you can solve the other puzzles on this page. If you CAN! If you ENJOY them! If you would like to have the opportunity to WIN A FORTUNE OF $102,500.00! THEN DON'T DELAY! *MAIL THE COUPON AT ONCE.*

By return mail, you will receive – ABSOLUTELY FREE – the full details and official rules of this contest, together with every bit of information you require in order to fill in and mail your solutions to the first Puzzle-Quiz and enter the contest.

Somebody MUST Win $102,500.00

Mailing the coupon costs you only a postage stamp. Do it NOW! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain because it will bring you, FREE, all information about the contest, the official rules, the first Puzzle-Quiz and Entry Form, and upon receipt of same you will be in position to enter RIGHT AWAY, and give yourself the chance to win $102,500.00, a sum of money greater than most people ever earn in a lifetime.

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PUZZLE-QUIZ CONTEST, **6681** 19
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Brooklyn 1, New York

Send Official Rules, first Puzzle-Quiz, complete information and Entry Form for your $167,500.00 Prize contest. It is understood that the above will be sent to me FREE and without any obligation on my part.

Name ☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Miss .....
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Address .....

City, Zone, State.....

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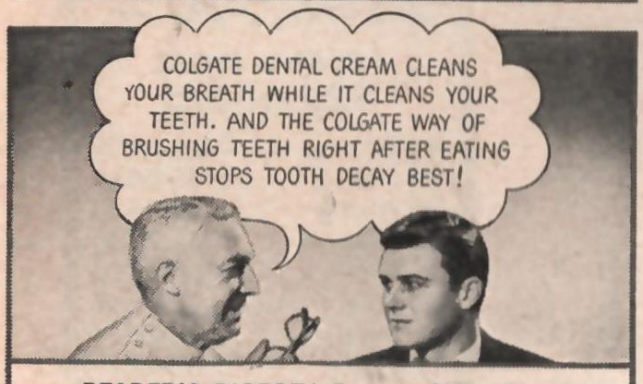
I Wish I Led a Dog's Life!
IF I GOT THE AFFECTION YOU POUR ON ROVER, I'D BE A LUCKY DOG, BETTY! HOW COME I GET THE SNARLING, DARLING?
BOB, I'M SORRY! BUT YOUR DENTIST IS THE ONE TO TELL YOU ABOUT A SUBJECT LIKE—LIKE BAD BREATH!


COLGATE DENTAL CREAM CLEANS YOUR BREATH WHILE IT CLEANS YOUR TEETH. AND THE COLGATE WAY OF BRUSHING TEETH RIGHT AFTER EATING STOPS TOOTH DECAY BEST!

READER'S DIGEST* Reported The Same Research Which Proves That Brushing Teeth Right After Eating with

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Reader's Digest recently reported the same research which proves the Colgate way of brushing teeth right after eating stops tooth decay best! The most thoroughly proved and accepted home method of oral hygiene known today!

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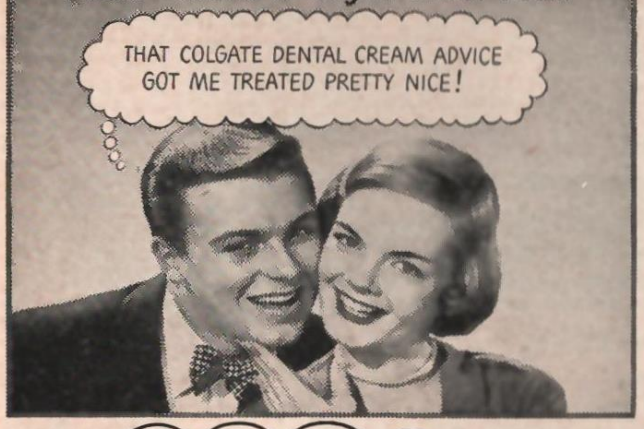
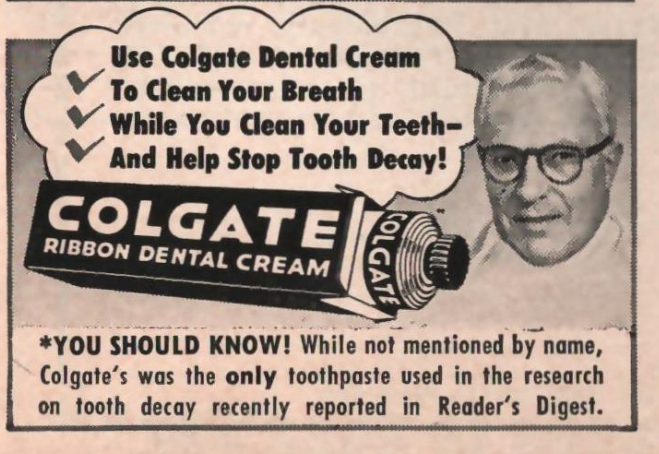
LATER—Thanks to Colgate Dental Cream





***YOU SHOULD KNOW!** While not mentioned by name, Colgate's was the **only** toothpaste used in the research on tooth decay recently reported in Reader's Digest.

Modern Romances

Every family starts with romance

March, 1951

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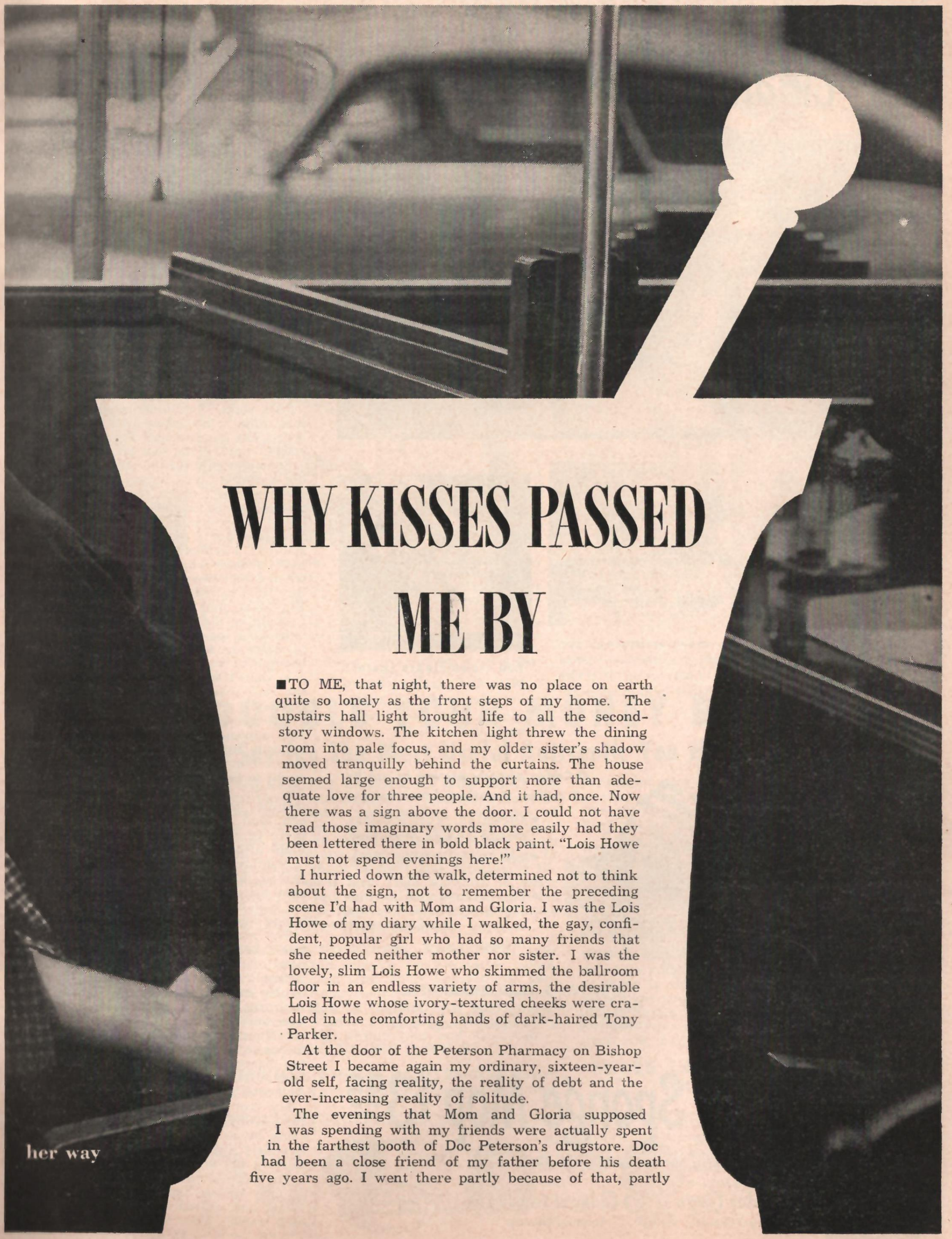
Doc sat down across
from me. "I'm ready
for that talk, Lois"

★ It took an older man to point out to Lois some sound reasons why no love came



WHY KISSES PASSED ME BY

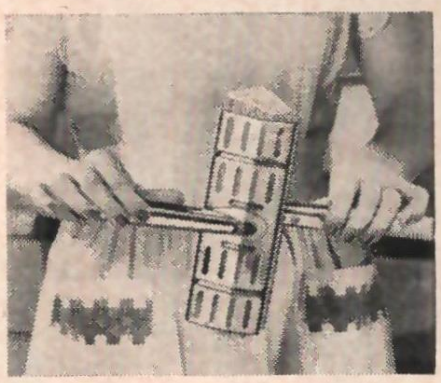
■TO ME, that night, there was no place on earth quite so lonely as the front steps of my home. The upstairs hall light brought life to all the second-story windows. The kitchen light threw the dining room into pale focus, and my older sister's shadow moved tranquilly behind the curtains. The house seemed large enough to support more than adequate love for three people. And it had, once. Now there was a sign above the door. I could not have read those imaginary words more easily had they been lettered there in bold black paint. "Lois Howe must not spend evenings here!"

I hurried down the walk, determined not to think about the sign, not to remember the preceding scene I'd had with Mom and Gloria. I was the Lois Howe of my diary while I walked, the gay, confident, popular girl who had so many friends that she needed neither mother nor sister. I was the lovely, slim Lois Howe who skimmed the ballroom floor in an endless variety of arms, the desirable Lois Howe whose ivory-textured cheeks were cradled in the comforting hands of dark-haired Tony Parker.

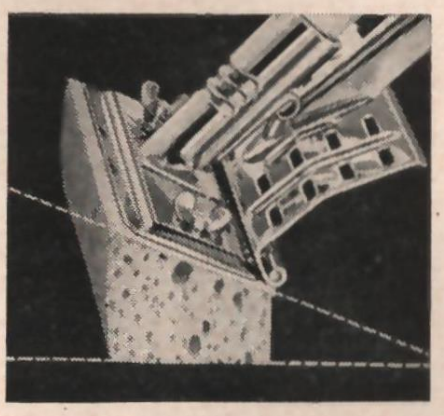
At the door of the Peterson Pharmacy on Bishop Street I became again my ordinary, sixteen-year-old self, facing reality, the reality of debt and the ever-increasing reality of solitude.

The evenings that Mom and Gloria supposed I was spending with my friends were actually spent in the farthest booth of Doc Peterson's drugstore. Doc had been a close friend of my father before his death five years ago. I went there partly because of that, partly

New wet mop keeps hands dry-cleans floors faster!



No more wringing! You simply press the water out of the O-Cedar Sponge Mop with the handy built-in squeezer!



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because none of the young crowd did, and partly because of Doc's quiet, understanding nature.

He looked up from the back counter when I went in. "Good evening, Lois. Pretty dolled up, aren't you? What's the occasion?"

"The usual occasion," I replied, trying to smile. "A double malted."

Waiting for him to fix it, I seated myself at the fountain, musing, *If I cry, he might sympathize.*

He cut into this contemplation with a rather stern reminder: "Double malteds aren't going to take any weight off you, Lois. And they won't take any weight off your bill, either." A smile kindled his light blue eyes. Sometimes he smiled only with his eyes, and the rest of his face remained quite solemn. "Tell your mother about that bill yet?" he asked me.

"No," I said miserably, keeping my gaze on his busy hands. "I've told you a hundred times why I can't talk to her. She mustn't know where I've been. I want her to think that I'm having dates and fun." My voice trembled, and I paused a moment to compose myself. "I'll pay you," I assured him. "I promise you I will. I've got my name on a baby-sitter list, and as soon as I get a chance—"

"All right," he interrupted. "Forget it this time." He shoved the cold drink across the counter and I rose with it and started toward the end booth.

Someone entered the store then, diverting his attention. Slowly, savoring every delicious sip, I drank the malted. Slowly, too, my thoughts took me away from the hard wood booth, from Doc's curiosity, from the world of closed doors and conspiracy. I remembered the gay, contented life I'd had when Dad had been alive, when I had been the baby and his favorite. He'd called me Little Meta and Mom Big Meta, and he'd told his friends that I would be the beauty in our family. Perhaps he'd only said that in my presence to make me feel good, for he was a kind, thoughtful type of man who probably foresaw that I would one day be jealous of the real beauty in our family—my sister, Gloria.

The drugstore door closed, and I heard Doc approaching. Sliding into the booth opposite me, he said in a calm, practical tone, "I'm worried about you, Lois. You ought to be with kids your age on a night like this. If you're having boy friend trouble, confess it to old Doc. Maybe I can lend a hand somewhere. Anyway, there isn't any sense in brooding about it night after night like this, is there?"

Numbly I shook my head, and while I looked deep into his bright blue eyes, a mist seemed to come down between us. He had broken down that hardened shell inside me. There were tears in my eyes.

The sight of them embarrassed him, I guess, because he scolded me. "Here, here, now! No reason for you to be sorry for yourself. You're the one who's had the double malted, and I'm the one who's left with the bill! Fifteen dollars and twenty-one cents worth!"

I should have laughed; he'd probably meant to be funny and cheer me up. But my disappointment was too sharp. I rose, murmured goodbye, went out onto the darkened sidewalk.

My feet dragged as I walked home, as they always did. It was this way when I came home from school, too. And then, strangely, I *was* coming home from school, reliving the misery of that afternoon. . . .

The store windows had reflected a group of girls across the street and their gay voices had wafted clearly above the thinning traffic. They were girls my age, and I knew them all by name. Still, I'd walked alone, not venturing a greeting, not want-

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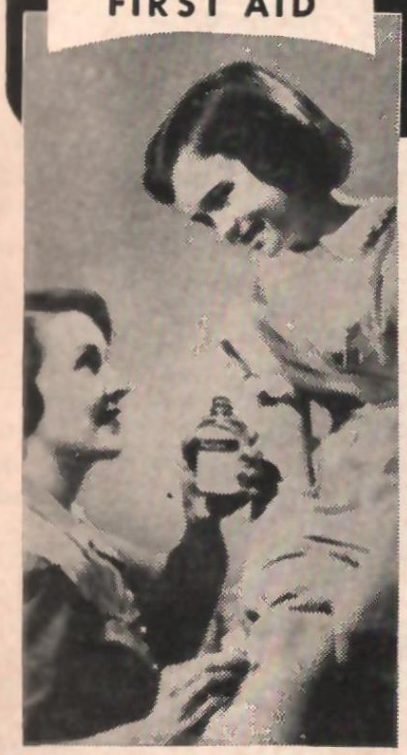
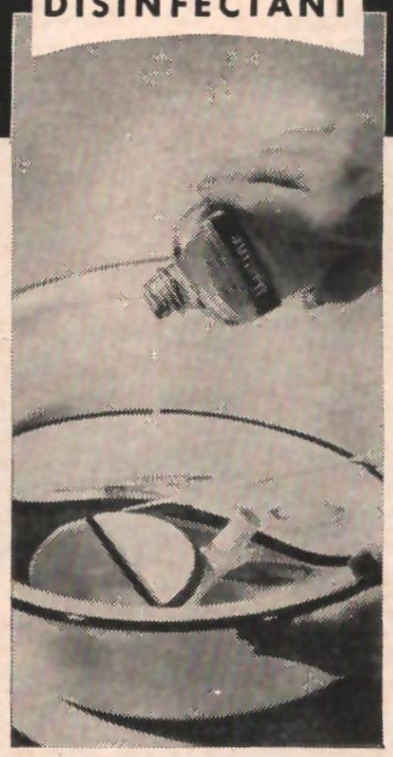


First Aid. BACTINE is ideal for cuts, scratches, burns and abrasions because it fights infection, cleanses the injury, reduces pain, and does not harm the skin. Does not stain the skin or clothing.

DISINFECTANT



Sickroom Utensils. Thermometers, syringes, dishes and hands are effectively sanitized by BACTINE'S germ-killing action. It combats the spread of disease germs. It's an excellent sanitizer for diapers and disinfectant for diaper containers.

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Athlete's Foot. It not only cleanses the affected areas and relieves the itching and burning of athlete's foot. but it is also an effective fungicide and fights off the germs which cause infection. It also helps relieve itching, burning, perspiring feet.

ITCHING SKIN

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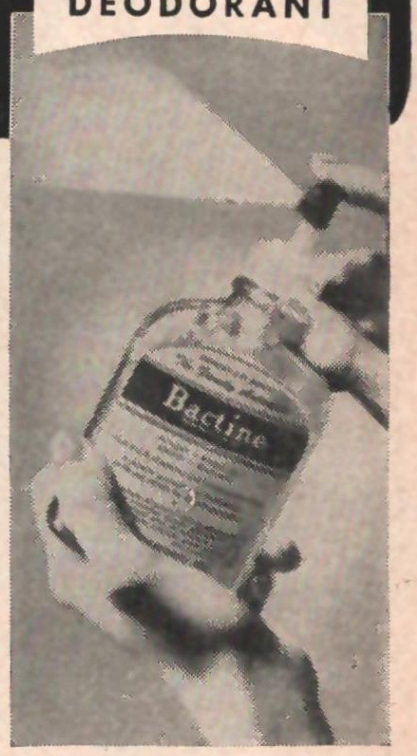
DEODORANT



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ing to be noticed. With my home and my appearance against me, I knew I had no place in the crowd.

One of the girls, seeing me, nudged a companion. Immediately her friend, Mary Kay, lifted her nose upward and began to swagger, while the others doubled over with laughter. The sound of that laughter tore through me; I wanted to scream at them as a child does, releasing my outrage in name-calling.

I had stopped short, glaring at them, when I saw Tony Parker, and my fury instantly shifted to a tremulous confusion. Though I longed desperately to talk to him, I was panic-stricken when I saw that he was going to cross over to my side of the street, and I began to hurry. I felt that I couldn't endure unkindness from him; I preferred to run away than risk it.

I had gone a block or two before I realized how absurd my behavior was. Why on earth had I thought he might be unkind? He had never even noticed me, let alone made fun of me. His crossing the street was probably coincidence.

Tony had filled my daydreams, and my diary, ever since my freshman year in high school, when we'd taken English together. He wasn't handsome; he wasn't much taller than I. Oh, there's a long list of things he wasn't, but there were things he *was,* too! He was quiet and well-mannered; he was respected and admired, and he was dark, like Daddy had been.

I heard high heels behind me. It was Gloria. *Oh,* I mused enviously, *if I were only as pretty as she! If I were as thin and as lovely, I wouldn't have to write lies in my diary!*

"Hi, sis!" she chimed at my side. "Why aren't you home helping Mom get supper?"

"Because I'm here," I snapped. "I can't be two places at once!"

She didn't say anything, and her silence was more maddening than anything she might have answered. We were on our block when she finally spoke. "I don't mean to push you around, Lois, but most kids your age are thoughtless and need to be reminded of their duties. I'd quit work an hour early to help Mom, only the insurance company would dock me."

Without rhyme or reason, I suddenly felt close to tears. I restrained the urge. I couldn't afford to cry. "You don't have any affection for me," I said. "You like yourself too well, and Mom, and your boy friends."

Her laughter pressed into my heart like a thousand splinters. I hated her then. I didn't want to. I knew it was despicable of me. Yet I *had* to hate her!

Although she could not have read my thoughts, she must have guessed them. "Don't be silly, Lois," she said as we came onto the porch. "You know I'd do anything in the world for you."

I remembered my debt at the drugstore. As she put her hand on the doorknob, I asked eagerly, "Would you, really? Would you loan me some money I need desperately?"

She frowned and countered warily, "How much money?"

"Fifteen dollars. I'll pay it all back, honest, just as soon as I can!"

"No, you won't, punky," she told me, opening the door, "because I haven't got it to lend. I owe Conroy's eight bucks out of next week's pay. And if I don't get some new shoes I'll be walking to work on my hands."

My momentary faith in her had again become awful antipathy. I flung at her, "Words are cheap! Don't ever pretend that you like me! You hate me! And what's worse, you're a hypocrite!"

Mom appeared at the dining room door. "Are you girls at each other's throats again?" she asked wearily.

"I was just explaining to Lois," Gloria said as she whipped an apron about her and went to the kitchen sink to wash, "that she could spend less time finding fault with me and more time correcting her own shortcomings. She could work around the house evenings, for one thing. She doesn't always have to be with her gang."

"It does seem to me that she spends too much time away from home," Mom agreed.

They were teaming up against me again! I poked at the pot on the stove and looked in the oven and tried to divert my bitter reflections with the contemplation of beef stew and hot muffins, but somehow ever their usually tantalizing aromas were fla to me.

"Sit down, girls," Mom said. "Supper's ready, and I've got a customer coming at six-thirty. Were you kept in after school again, Lois?"

"Heavens, no!" I protested, as though I hadn't been kept in three times last week. "I was with the gang a while," I resumed animatedly, inventing a happy episode as I talked, "and then Tony bought me a soda."

"Whoever Tony is," Mom said, "I wish he wouldn't treat you to sodas before supper."

"Whoever *Tony* is!" I flared. "Haven't you heard me mention Tony Parker before? Then you don't listen, because we're very, very serious about each other!"

"Going steady?" Gloria bantered. Without waiting for an answer, she turned to Mom. "Do you remember my first steady? How old was I? Fourteen or so? He had awful buckteeth—remember? You said you couldn't tell if he was good-looking or not but he certainly had strong, bright teeth!"

They laughed together, while I sat rigid. Finally I cut sharply into their merriment. "We'll probably get married, Tony and I."

It served to still the laughter, which was all I wanted.

"Oh, no, Lois," Mom almost pleaded. "Not until you finish high school, anyway! I didn't realize that you might get serious over one of your young friends. You've never even brought him here. Why don't you ask him to the house some evening?"

A grim satisfaction filled me. I said smugly, "Tony doesn't like visiting people's houses. We like to go places and do things. We like excitement."

"What kind of excitement, Lois?" Mom queried anxiously.

"Run Sheep Run, no doubt," Gloria quipped. "Pass me another biscuit, please. They're delicious, Mom."

Run Sheep Run, no doubt . . . the words spun around in my brain like suffocating, derisive laughter, and my heart smouldered with resentment. I thought confusedly of throwing something at my sister, or of breaking down in tears to show Mom what Gloria was doing to me. My mind was in complete and aching chaos, and my throat constricted around all the words that I couldn't let out. "What kind of excitement?" I finally echoed in a hard, contemptuous tone. "The kind that appeals to engaged couples. Something Gloria wouldn't know anything about."

There was a thick, solemn quiet around the table. Then Gloria screwed up her pretty face. "Mom," she asked miserably, "what makes her like that?"

"You do, Gloria!" I shrieked through the tightening knot in my throat. "You do!" I bolted from the table and dashed upstairs. Still, my eyes were dry, hot and burning dry. . . .

How could Mom fail to see where the blame lay? How could she cherish Gloria so when Gloria was making my life insufferable?

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There wasn't an answer. It was futile of me to search for answers to riddles. I determined to show them that it didn't matter to me. They could laugh or cry together forever, but I was self-sufficient!

I got up and began undressing, selecting from my closet the silk dress that Mom had made when I'd sung in the Christmas choir. It was my special-occasion dress, and tonight, if only in my diary, was to be a special occasion.

While I was drawing on lipstick, I caught Mom's reflection behind me in the mirror. In the yellowish lamplight she looked heartachingly weary. Shame surged through me, momentarily crumbling my defiance.

"Going out again, Lois?" she asked guardedly.

"Why, I thought I would," I replied irresolutely.

"Going somewhere important?"

"I—I don't know, Mom. Tony said something about a drive but—but I'd just as soon—"

I'd meant to say, "I'd just as soon stay home with you," but she interrupted. "Why doesn't anyone ever call for you, Lois?"

One lie necessitates another; I said, "Because none of my friends live around here. It's out of the way."

"But Gloria lets me meet her friends," she replied. "Don't you understand, dear, that that way I don't worry?"

"You never worry about Gloria!" I snapped resentfully. "You think she's perfect! You don't see her faults, but that doesn't mean she hasn't got them! It isn't fair! It isn't fair at all!" I had lost control of myself entirely. I jerked away from Mom's outstretched hand. Regardless of what I wanted, I was being pushed out of the house. I *had* to leave! I had to remember that sign above the door!

"What isn't fair?" Mom asked in quiet bewilderment. "Is it fair for you to go off at night with people I've never met, to do heaven knows what? Is that fair?"

But I ran out of my room, down the stairs, out the front door. It was then that I had realized where the loneliest place in the world was. Right here. My own home!

Now, walking back from the drugstore, I wondered if the evening might have been different. If I'd told Mom that my date had been postponed, I could have stayed home with her instead of wasting time. But, it sharply occurred to me, that still would have meant lying! What was wrong with me that I couldn't live from one day to another without lying to my mother?

It wasn't a matter of what was wrong with me, I reassured myself. It was Gloria's making fun of me. My imaginary gang was my weapon against her alliance with Mom, just as my diary was my cloak against my loneliness.

Remembering my diary and the eventful evening that I intended to write about in it, I went inside. Cat-softly I tiptoed upstairs, inventing a "special occasion" as I undressed. I would pretend that Tony had taken me to an exiting roadside inn where I had danced as gracefully as Cinderella.

I reached under my pillow, where I always kept my diary. For a moment my hand groped around. Then, realizing that it was gone, I frantically tore both pillows off the bed. My heart thumped as though it would break through my chest. When I found it at last, at the foot of the bed, my breath was knocked from me with mingled relief and consternation. Quite obviously, it had been read!

I sat down, trembling, unable to comprehend how anyone could have committed such a sacrilege. It was an invasion

of my private dreams! It was the most insufferable of outrages! I wanted nothing so much as to wake up Mom and Gloria, demanding to know which of them had done this to me.

I sat still and managed to reason it out. Gloria seldom came into my room, and Mom had been here when I'd left this evening. Gloria would have taken it into her own room to read, and Mom would have sat down to read it here. Gloria would have put it back under my pillow. Mom had just dropped it!

Dropped it like a branding iron, like deadly poison, like the evil thing it was! What must she think of me now? My face burned as I recalled some of the things I'd written in it. I flipped through a few pages, trying to project myself into Mom's frame of mind as she had gone through it. Trying to feel her reaction.

September 27. After supper tonight I met Tony and we went to the Peter Piper and danced. He requested our song twice, but the bandleader wasn't going to play it the second time until he saw me! At intermission he came over to our table and wanted to meet me, but Tony said I was all his; nothing doing. And I am. All his.

September 28. Saturday night, our big night! We drove down to Tony's parents' summer place by the lake, all alone. He mixed some drinks at the bar. Heaven only knows what was in them. We lounged around till midnight, with only the fire in the fireplace for lights. And then Tony said he'd better get me back home; he didn't know what he might do. Oh diary, I wish we were married!

I couldn't read any more. I dropped the book just as Mom must have done, and I put my head in my hands—as she too must have done! Oh why, why had I allowed myself to write such things?

■ I LAY AWAKE all night, impatient for morning. I'd made a resolution. I had no other alternative but to confess my lies to Mom. The worst of it was, I had no reason whatever to think that she would believe me now. She would think the truth was the lie, and that all the lies in my diary were honest confessions! I would have to go to Doc Peterson and get him to write her a note, telling her where I'd been spending my evenings. Even though derision followed me for years, I had to prove to Mom that I was not the wild and racy girl of my diary.

At seven o'clock I dressed quickly, forgetting about make-up for the first time in two years. Rushing downstairs, I noticed that the kitchen was unusually quiet. Mom must have overslept.

Almost running along Bishop Street, I had to pass a group of girls on their way to school. One of them was Mary Kay. "What's your hurry?" she called after me. I sped on, not answering. What did she care? I had no friends.

The translucent amber and rose, green and violet of the old-fashioned bottles in the pharmacy window made me reconsider. My heart actually quickened as I realized that I was not altogether friendless. Doc would write my note promptly, perhaps with a question or two, but understanding, nevertheless, the urgency of my request.

He was dusting shelves when I went in. Putting down the feather duster, he greeted me affably. "Good morning, Lois. Not a malted this early, is it?"

I shook my head. "Please," I began, "help me out of a terrible mess! I've been lying to Mom, and now I'm in too deep! She'll never believe it was all lies unless you write her a note!" I saw from the look on his face that he didn't know what I was talking about. I choked and finished,

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"Just write that I've been here evenings. I haven't been dancing and going to summer cottages!"

A faint smile flickered over his face, but he held his eyes steady on me. "Now, let me get this straight," he said with exasperating patience. "I guess your bill is worrying you; is that it? You want her to know the truth, so she'll settle it with me. I don't want your mother's money, Lois. I'm in no hurry for it, and it has to come from you. Is that your trouble?"

I shook my head, feeling my eyes fill up with hot tears. "No, *no!* It has nothing to do with the bill! It's worse, much worse!"

"Suppose we sit down and talk about it," he suggested gently.

Nodding, I went numbly over to my customary booth.

Just as he started to follow me, the door opened. "Good morning," he said with evident surprise. "What can I do for you, Gloria?"

I felt my breath push out of me. I crouched against the wall of the booth, wanting to press myself out of sight. What, I wondered dully, was she doing here? Looking for me?

"I want something for a headache," Gloria said. "Mom's head is bursting. I can't go to work with her like this."

Doc bustled to the back of the store and I could see him behind the medicine counter working with some powders. I was feverish with the fear that she would walk back there and see me.

But she remained near the door. "It can't be serious, can it, Doc?" she asked. "It could be just nerves?"

"Nerves," he replied thoughtfully, "can be as serious as anything else. Something come up at your house to cause this?"

"I'm sure of it but I don't know just what. Mom's eyes were all swollen from crying, and Lois was gone, and that isn't like her, to leave without breakfast or anything. Mom worries enough about her as it is. She blames herself for the things Lois does." Gloria's voice was full of agitation and concern. "You know how Mom is, so soft and frail! I can't have her unhappy on anybody's account."

Doc came around to the front with the package he'd prepared for her. "Take it easy, Gloria," he soothed her. "This ought to fix your mother up in a few hours. If she's not better, call a doctor. Don't you worry now. There's enough worrying going on in your family without your fretting too."

I heard Gloria murmur thanks and the door close. I sat shivering, my bitterness settling into something cold and numb. A cup of hot coffee was placed before me and Doc settled himself on the seat opposite me. "I've brought you a shoulder to cry on, Lois, if you want it," he said quietly. "I'm ready for that talk. I don't know what's the matter but I know it isn't nothing. I've known you since you were the happiest kid who ever came into my store. You used to bring sunshine in with you, Lois. And now your eyes are always like a storm's stirring up behind them. As dark as that coffee, but not as warm. You've changed."

"Yes," I admitted sullenly, averting those stormy eyes from him. "I changed because I had to."

"What kind of talk is that?" he chided. "Did somebody twist your arm and say, 'Lois Howe, you've got to change'? Likely, it was this way: you didn't like the way things were running, and you figured that if you were different they might be different too. That's usually why a person changes."

I looked up again. "*What* things?"

The question brought a brief, low laugh from him. "If it were my story, I'd tell you what things. Now, suppose you tell me."

"I can't think of anything," I said despondently. "I can't think of anything at all any more, except wanting to stay home and not being able to. About wanting to cry and not being able to. About wanting not to lie and having to, all the time. You see, no one cares about me."

His blue eyes smiled. "That's one of those lies that you're always having to tell. I know better. I know your mother, Lois. And you know as well as I that she cares."

A violent resentment rose within me. "She *worries* about me," I managed brokenly, "but she doesn't *care* about me. She and Gloria only care about each other. Mom doesn't know that Gloria hates me."

He shook his head. "God didn't mean for us to hate, Lois. You know that. And you know too that your sister *doesn't* hate you."

"She does! Oh, she does!" I whispered miserably. "You heard what she said: 'I can't have Mom unhappy on anybody's account.' She meant mine."

"Aren't you turning it around to suit yourself? She didn't imply you were to blame. She merely said that she couldn't have her mother being unhappy."

I saw what he was pointing out to me, but I wanted to protest vehemently. I wanted to assure him that I was abused, misunderstood and despised. But I could only nod and stare dumbly at him.

"Too often we project our own feelings onto others," he went on thoughtfully. "You've got a lot of things turned inside out, Lois. Your father adored you. He babied you and maybe he spoiled you, but when he died he left a huge gap in your life. Your mother was as grief-stricken as you were, so she couldn't help you very much over your loss. On top of that. Gloria, being older, probably comforted her a great deal. Perhaps you were left out of things at home; I don't know. But I *do* know that it wasn't because nobody cared for you or loved you."

"Gloria couldn't love me," I sobbed, "and find so much fault with me!"

"Why not?" he countered, grinning. "Even happily married couples find fault with each other." He sobered and mused, "You'd be as pretty as she, Lois, if you'd cut down on the malteds and stop stuffing yourself so often." He folded his arms on the table and leaned toward me. "Ever hear about compensation? That's what you're doing every time you order a double malted. You're making up to yourself for the loss of your father's love by indulging your sweet tooth. You curb that appetite and you'll slim down to the laughing little kid I used to ask to marry me."

That made my tears start afresh. I shook my head, trying to fight off waves of self-pity. Giving up, I brought my head down swiftly into the crook of my arm.

Another customer entered, and I heard Doc go to wait on him. When the door closed, I composed myself and sat up. "You're so good to me," I told him as he took his place opposite me again. "I'm grateful, Doc, but I just don't deserve it! I lie. I hurt people. And I hate people, too!"

"You hate because you're hurt," he told me. "Furthermore, you don't hate *people* —you only hate Lois Howe."

I hated Gloria; hadn't I made that clear? Her words had hurt me, true. Her protecting manner toward Mom always hurt me. Suddenly I was struck by the nonsensical, unending circle that her attitude and my behavior threw our lives into. Because I worried Mom, Gloria was forced to protect her. And because Gloria comforted Mom, I acted the way I did!

I leaned toward Doc. "Will you write

that note? I'll give it to Mom and she'll stop worrying about me."

He sat still, scanning my face with grave consideration. He said finally, "I'll write it, Lois, if that's the way you want it. But first let me explain something. No one has discovered an immediate cure for any serious illness. Lying is a sort of sickness, don't you think?"

I brought out woodenly, "You mean I'll have to prove to her myself that I've changed, by my behavior, and she'll gradually begin to trust me. But I'll be lonely. I'll be miserably lonely."

"No one is lonely who likes himself," he put in. "You didn't believe me when I said you hated yourself, did you? Test that theory, Lois. You like yourself for a change, and you'll be surprised how many people flock to follow your example."

Sliding out of the booth, I gave him my hand and said feelingly, "You're the best medicine you've got in your store, Doc. I feel better already."

"You've stopped crying, anyway," he smiled, getting up with me. "But remember, don't expect any miraculous recovery."

■ IT WAS lunchtime when I arrived at school and the halls were filled with students coming and going from the cafeteria. Taking my books from my locker, I went to my fifth hour class, looking straight ahead, speaking to no one.

I can't suddenly begin greeting everyone, I thought, *joining groups, linking arms with some girl!* Oh, what a hard task being friendly is when you've never been before!

When the dismissal bell rang, Tony Parker leaned across the aisle, resting his elbow on my desk. "I'd like to ask you something, Lois," he said.

"What is it?" I asked stiffly, folding my warm, trembly hands in my lap.

"Well," he began nervously, "it's about after school yesterday. I've been wondering about it. Were you running from me when I started to cross Bishop, or didn't you see me?"

I gazed at him with amazement. Then he *had* crossed the street to talk to me! It was incredible! I merely shook my head at him, trying to believe what had always been a dream.

He said with relief, "I'm glad you didn't see me. I kind of thought—well, it's not important now." He rose with his books and stood there a moment, looking down at me appraisingly. Then, with a self-conscious smile, he added, "Next time, look for me," and strolled out of the emptying classroom.

Although that episode had been more wonderful than anything I'd made up in my diary, I wasn't even thinking of Tony as I started home. I wanted to fly, to get there as soon as possible and confide in Mom. I wanted to talk to her before Gloria returned from work.

A group of girls were loitering at the corner of Bishop and Main. At first I scarcely gave a thought to them, other than to think of crossing the street. But then it occurred to me that they had always turned off at the previous block. With perplexity, I heard one of them call, "Hi, Lois! Going our way?"

I walked over hesitantly.

Mary Kay informed me, "We've got a bet on about you. Is it true that Tony has a crush on you?"

"Mary saw you two gabbing together after English," Sara Lang told me, matching her steps to mine. "He wouldn't say scat to a girl unless there was something to it."

"What he said wasn't important," I confessed. "I've got to (*Continued on page 53*)

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These are your letters, on the subjects that interest you most. Here you are welcome to share your opinions of the stories, your ideas on love, marriage, parenthood, your personal problems. We'll print, and pay for, as many as space permits

HUMOR

Dear Editor: So many stories have a tragic theme that I doubly enjoyed "A Husband in a Million" in your December issue. It was wholesome, refreshing in its normal outlook, and it left me smiling and feeling good all over. All stories can't be gay—adults realize that life isn't like that—but let's sprinkle it with the stardust of humor now and again.

Miss S. K.
New York, N. Y.

Dear Editor: "A Husband in a Million" was really nice. As long as you go on printing stories like it I'll stick to my contention that MODERN ROMANCES is tops. It's heartwarming to realize that here is a magazine printing stories that come from the heart instead of the tabloids.

Mrs. P. J. O'C.
St. Paul, Minn.

MODERN FAMILY

Dear Editor: Annis O'Neal's "A Baby Needn't Cost Much" (December) has raised my hopes about being able to afford my first child, due in July. I'm already following the budget, buying only necessary things.

Mrs. E. T. L.
Houston, Tex.

Dear Editor: MODERN ROMANCES is tops in reading now for both teen-agers and parents. Hurray for the Modern Family Section and the understanding shown in the stories of the literary demands of that family.

V. R.
San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Editor: Thank you for "Danger, Second Anniversary" (December). We are on our third year and were having the same troubles. I was ready to give up, so I felt that the article was written directly at me. We have both read it, and are like newlyweds again.

Mrs. B. L. J.
Port Clinton, O.

ANSWERS TO READERS

Dear Editor: I have just read Miss K. B.'s letter in your December issue, and I want to tell her about my aunt who, at forty-nine, is a bride of six months. She lived a quiet, uneventful life with hardly any friends her own age. Then, at forty-five, she suddenly blossomed out. She had her hair tinted, learned to dance and met a host of new friends. Among them was a fine man her own age with a fine sense of humor to match hers. Now she has her own home and is as happy as a young girl. You're only as young as you feel, you know.

Mrs. W. M.
Houston, Tex.

Dear Editor: About the letter in your December issue on the moral standards of boys and girls—I'm a sixteen-year-old boy myself and of course I think both sexes should have high moral standards. How otherwise can they establish a solid foundation for successful marriage?

G. T. Z.
Statesbury, W. Va.

Dear Editor: Miss S. F. M. asks in the December issue about her dating problem. Young as she is, she must realize that every boy she goes with should be considered husband material. She is not choosing between this boy and her friends but between him and all the friends she will ever have. I think it goes deeper than being ashamed of the way he dresses; she is ashamed of *him*, and the one person she must be able to look up to is the man she marries. When she finds the right man she won't have any doubts.

Mrs. B. K.
Durand, Ill.

SOLVES THEIR PROBLEM

Dear Editor: I want to thank you for publishing "I Can Never Call Him Son" (December). We had a similar situation at home and Thelma's solution has become ours. So many times lives become mixed up and we cannot find the answer alone; thanks for helping us through.

Mrs. A. A. H.
North Freedom, Wis.

Dear Editor: I thought I knew it all when I was in my teens. Now that I've been married four years I still learn something from every story in MODERN ROMANCES. I take an extra minute at the end of each story to sum up its moral in one sentence. It's a good habit to get into.

Mrs. J. W.
Hamilton, O.

TRAILERS

Dear Editor: I feel quite a bit like Millie in "Put Kindness First" (December). I used to sit home and wait for my husband to visit us week ends until we bought our home on wheels so that we could travel wherever his job took him. We've met lovely people and enjoyed seeing different states from our own home.

Mrs. F. L. P.
Des Moines, Ia.

SCHOOL CLUBS

Dear Editor: "Teen-Age Dictators" (December), the story of high school clubs, fascinated me. When I graduated from high school nine years ago we didn't have organizations like that. Could things have changed so much because of the war? I'll have to warn my three children to avoid the mistakes those kids made when they reach that age.

Mrs. J. F.
Evansville, Ind.

$5 for letters printed in full, $1 for letters printed in part. If you have pictures referring to your letters which you think would be of interest to others, send them in, with a stamped envelope for their return if they're not used. Address: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? Modern Romances, P. O. Box 125, Murray Hill Station, New York 16, N. Y.

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SURPRISE DAUGHTER

A Short, Short Story

★ At four, she got her first prayer answered

■ I HAD BEEN in South America about four years, bumming around, mostly, when a letter that had been written eight months before caught up with me and it was like a killing punch hit me where my heart is.

I grabbed the first plane home. I saw a lawyer and then I beat it up to the second floor of a run-down apartment house and knocked on a door. "Mrs. Boyer?" I asked the shabby, thin-faced woman who answered. "I'm Tim Farrow. I cabled you."

She started talking at once, in a high, complaining twang. "I got your cable. Come in. Your ex-wife lived right across the hall and I gave my word when she was dying, real sudden like from pneumonia, that I'd look out for Patty for a year. Then if Mr. Ramsey, the lawyer, couldn't find you, I'd have to put her in a home, she having no kin to go to. It isn't what a body wants, goodness knows, but—"

"Yes, yes," I said impatiently. "I know all that from the lawyer."

I could have told her some other things. That I hadn't even known I had a daughter, for instance. Her ma and I had married during the war and soon after I'd come home she'd walked out on me, not telling me there was a baby coming. Only, when she knew she was dying she'd told the lawyer to try and find me, so the kid wouldn't be kicked into an orphanage.

But I didn't tell the woman. Let her think what she pleased. I'd settle what I owed her, take my kid and beat it. I'd find a good home for her, with a young couple maybe who had a youngster of their own, someone who would bring her up right. Then I'd clear out again.

The woman was still cackling away. "Make yourself at home, Mr. Farrow. I'll get Patty. She's at nursery school."

She left and I found a chair that I figured would hold up under my hundred and ninety pounds and sat down.

There was a bleary mirror on the wall and I got a glimpse of my face. I had never given my looks much thought but now (*Continued on page 52*)

"I prayed the Little Lord Jesus every night that you would come"

Lissa stole
a chapter from
another girl's
love life,
but wasn't her
sweetheart in the
book of hearts
more to blame
than she?
We leave it
to you
to judge

I was afraid to go into the house. My family would be shocked speechless

No wedding night for me

■ NO BLOOD SISTERS were closer than Ann and I. She was my valiant champion against Dad's "blood will tell" obsession.

As a small child I hadn't understood his constant picking on me. I had a vague feeling that there was something dark and shameful hidden in me, and, as I grew, the feeling grew with me. I knew now, of course, how my adoption had come about. After five years of childless marriage, Mother's constant pleading had finally broken down Dad's resistance and he'd given his consent to adopt a baby. The ink was scarcely dry on the adoption papers when Mother knew she was going to have a child of her own. Mother's heart was big enough for both of us, but with Dad it was entirely different. He resented everything about me, and most of all my looks.

It was a great help to me that Ann turned out to be so brainy, for then Dad laughed and said, "Sure, Lissa's beautiful but dumb. Ann has all the brains." It seemed to thin out his hate of me.

In school, Ann was popular with the girls and I with the boys, which brought nasty remarks from Dad. He was very strict about what time I got home from dates, although he'd never say a word about Ann getting in late, even though she was younger.

I never held it against Ann, and when Dad announced that only she could go to college, it was she, not I, who cried; she even refused to go until I convinced her I didn't want to.

It was our first separation and we felt it deeply. Ann made friends now in a new circle, particularly Norma Blake, who came from a near-by town. Not having any sisters of her own, Norma wanted Ann all to herself and was jealous of the close attachment between Ann and me. She tried to exclude me from their social activities whenever she could.

Their third year in college, Norma invited Ann down to their lovely seashore cottage for the whole summer. It was there Ann met Stephen, Norma's brother, home from his last year at Johns Hopkins. Her letters to me glowed with her love for him, and before the summer was over they announced their engagement.

The most persistent man in my life was Dick Warner, a smooth guy with a gay manner and plenty of money. What the family had against him was that he was divorced and almost ten years older than I. I had fun with him, but I too had my dreams.

Ann planned her engagement party for the evening of my return from vacation the second week in September. I'm sure even the walls of our house reflected the radiant happiness of our family that evening, and Ann's happiness made her almost beautiful.

She sat on my bed and watched me unpack. "Oh Lissa, you'll just love my Stephen!"

I laughed. "Even if he's as repulsive as those snaps you showered me with, I'll still love him for your sake."

"He's the most wonderful-looking man on earth," she declared, "though not in the handsome Dick Warner way. Which reminds me, Dad wouldn't let me invite Dick tonight. D'you mind?"

"I bleed inside."

"Any old time that a man'll make *you* suffer," she laughed. "But seriously, Lissa, I hope you never fall in love with him." She studied her nails. "I wonder if Stephen'll like you."

"Not if he's anything like Norma, but I'm determined to like my Ann's future husband."

"I get goose bumps when you say that. Oh Lissa, I'm so happy!"

As usual, I was late getting down to the party. Ann said, "And this is Lissa, Stephen."

I smiled up at him and put my hand in his. All life trembled to a halt; the room was a desert without sand or sky or time. There were only two people in the world.

Ann's voice brought me back abruptly to the crowded living room. "I hope you two will like each other."

I took my hand back and Stephen said slowly, "Any sister of yours, Ann—"

Other people came and gratefully I got myself away, but all evening, behind every word I uttered, every step I danced, ran the obbligato, *He's Ann's.* The one man in all the world for me was Ann's!

Watching them across the room, I thought, *They're perfect for each other. Ann's so idealistic, so fine, and he'll make a wonderful doctor; he has such kind, understanding eyes.* And to the mounting warmth within me, *He'll make a wonderful lover too. Oh Ann, you've got the world!* As I thought those words, all the old feeling of inequality swept over me. Nothing, not even my looks, could put me on the same plane as Ann.

Ann went back to college for her last year and Stephen interned at General Hospital in our town. They were both so busy that they left most of the planning for their spring wedding to me. I even did Ann's shopping for her, informing her regularly that I was the hardest-working maid of honor that had ever been.

New Year's Eve, I got my first inkling that my attraction to Stephen wasn't completely one-sided. A big crowd of us made up the party at the night club, Ann and Stephen, several other couples and Dick and I.

Dick suddenly addressed the crowd around the table. "Tell me, don't you all agree there's a decided saving in wear and tear on the brides' family to have a double wedding?"

Someone cried, "Is this an announcement?"

Stephen's face went marble still.

Laughingly, I shrugged my shoulders.

"Don't be alarmed," Dick said mockingly, looking at his watch. "I always propose to Lissa on Saturday and there's only ten minutes left of this one."

Later on, when I danced with Stephen, I could feel the trembling of his hand on my back. "If you don't watch out, Lissa, Dick will wear you down. He's an expert at it," he warned me.

"You dislike him, don't you?"

"He's bad business for any woman." His arm tightened about me. "I couldn't bear to see you hurt," he whispered.

Then quickly we were apart, staring at each other. The truth at last, exposed between us. Too shaken to dance any more, we returned to the table and avoided even looking at each other for the rest of the evening.

■ THROUGH all of January and February I weighed the issue of my love for Stephen. One time I'd evade him, the next deliberately open the door to him. *I could have him so easily,* I told myself. But how could I hurt Ann?

Spring came early. One day the ragged ends of winter lay on the city streets; the next, trees and lawns quivered into green.

Walking downtown that day I saw Stephen enter a bookstore. On quick impulse I followed him but, inside, I slipped around the high shelves and came upon him by apparent chance.

He said, his face lighting up, "What are you doing here?"

"Buying a book for Ann. A new one she's been raving about. But you look frayed out, Stephen. Is there anything wrong?"

He passed his hand over his eyes. "We lost a little girl in our ward today. I knew the case was hopeless from the start but I rooted for her and she put up such a valiant fight."

"Oh Stephen," I put my hand on his arm, "you mustn't break your heart for everyone."

His hand covered mine and held it close

for a moment. "I know. I've trained myself to accept death in the old but in the young it's hard."

"Let's have a drink to cheer you up. I can get the book some other time."

We went to the place next door and relaxed in deep leather chairs and drank martinis.

I said, "What you need is a good long rest." *And please, dear Stephen, don't look at me like that.*

"Guess I do," he agreed. Then, with a little smile, "Does Dick still propose every Saturday night?"

"Oftener, sometimes."

"He finds your resistance intriguing."

"So do I," I laughed. Then, to douse the look in his eyes, I said hurriedly, "Ann had the first fitting of her wedding dress this week; she wrote me about it. Stephen, you love her very much, don't you?"

I'd deliberately stoned the barrier we'd built up so carefully; his answer sliced through the tense silence: "To me she's the most wonderful girl in the world." He might as well have said, "But you're the one I love."

I glanced down at my watch. "Heavens," I cried, in manufactured dismay, "I've got to rush. I have a date for eight-thirty this evening."

Out on the street I hailed a passing cab and waved to Stephen, still standing on the curb, a battle in his face. *Never,* I swore, *will that happen again.* What perverse devil had made me suggest a drink? It was a perfectly normal thing to do, I reasoned, but there was nothing normal between us. We must never be alone again.

■ THE FIRST NIGHT of Ann's Easter vacation she came into my room after I got in from a date with Dick. She closed the door quietly and leaned against it. "It's all over between Stephen and me, Lissa. I gave him back his ring tonight."

Fear like a suffocating tide beat in my throat. "But why?"

"He's in love with another girl. I made him admit it. I've known for at least two months that something was wrong. At first I put it down to overwork but finally I forced myself to face the truth that he was no longer in love with me."

I moistened my lips. "Did he tell you who the other girl was?"

"No, and I don't want to know." She pressed her hands hard together. "I dread telling Mother and Dad. They thought so much of Stephen. They won't understand these things can just happen that way."

I felt like Judas. I couldn't stand the pain so naked in her face. "You—you'll get over it, Ann."

"No," she said quietly, "I'll always love him." With her hand on the doorknob, she turned. "Don't be too hard on him, Lissa; he fought it." She was gone.

■ I DIDN'T see Stephen for several weeks after that. He met me one night outside the office building where I worked. "Let's talk," he said. "My car's just down the street."

We hardly spoke until we were out of the city and Stephen had found a place to park; then he said, "Lissa, you at least must understand I had to do it. It was impossible to go ahead and marry a fine girl like Ann when I was always thinking of you. No one seems to grasp that. Certainly not my family."

"Do they know?"

"That you're the girl? No."

"You know they'll hate me. That's it, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's it. They almost hate me too."

"It's an awful mess." I put my face down in my hands. "I just can't do it to Ann."

He put his arm about my shoulders. "But you do love me. That first night we met—even then you knew."

"Yes."

"Then we can't help ourselves."

We clung together, the magic of our kisses erasing all the world but us. . . .

We saw each other almost every night

from then on. Stephen either picked me up outside my office or waited on the boulevard for me. It wasn't a very satisfactory arrangement, for his work often made last-minute changes in our plans.

He decided finally that we must tell our families and he couldn't understand my consuming fear about it. I explained one evening when we were having dinner together. "You don't know the situation, Stephen. Even if I were their own daughter, my parents would feel badly enough about it. As it is—" I crumbled my roll into bits. "Well, you may as well know it—my foster father has never really liked me."

"I had a feeling there was something like that all along," he admitted. "But let me take the blame. We can't go on like this."

The next night he called the house and asked for me. It was out in the open at last.

■ WE WERE at the table when the telephone rang. Its ringing brought a look of sudden hope to Mother's and Dad's faces, a guarded one to Ann's and sickening fear to me. I pretended not to listen while Dad answered, though my ears ached with the strain.

"Why, hello, Stephen. Oh, we're all fine."

A silence followed; then Dad rasped, "Who? Lissa? Just a moment."

I was afraid to lift my eyes to him as I went to the phone and mumbled hello.

"I know, Lissa," Stephen admitted miserably. "It's tough on you, but we have to be frank about it, darling."

I couldn't shape words against the accusing silence from the dining room.

Stephen understood. "I'll park over on the boulevard and wait for you. Hours, if necessary, but do come, Lissa."

I replaced the telephone and wiped my damp hands on my handkerchief. I'd have given the world not to face my family at that moment. I thought of escaping to my room but Dad stood in the dining room door. "So *you're* the cause of Ann's broken engagement." He looked at her and Mother. "Now you'll believe me. This is the thanks we get for bringing up a—"

Ann jumped to her feet. "For heaven's sake, Dad, cut out the melodramatics."

"Don't tell me that even now you'll stick up for her?"

She said quietly, "I do think she should have a chance to explain."

"What?" he exploded. "Let her hoodwink you and your mother with a pack of lies? Not this time. I know what she's done; every chance she got, she made up to Stephen behind your back. She bewitched him."

Ann cut in, "Quite apparently, Stephen has made his choice."

Dad banged the table with his fist. "He won't come here!"

"Don't worry," I cried. "He won't!" I caught up a wrap and ran out of the house.

"It was pretty awful, wasn't it?" Stephen sympathized, opening the car door for me. "I should have gone to the house but I just didn't have the courage."

"It's not Ann," I said quickly, "but Mother and Dad. They'll never forgive either of us. They forbid you to come to the house. Dad puts all the blame on me; he says I've bewitched you."

A wry smile twisted his mouth. "You have," and he pulled me over to him.

As usual, we hardly talked at all. Stephen found a place to park and took me silently into his arms. Our lips hungrily together—this was our language.

The following evening, he told me, "I met Ann today. I dreaded it, though I knew it was inevitable. She came up to me on the street and said she hoped we'd be very happy; that you are as good as you are beautiful."

"Oh, but I'm not!" I cried. "She knows I'm weak and selfish and—"

He went on as if he hadn't heard me. "She said everyone else was upset but she'd be glad to do anything she could for us."

A sharp thought shot across my mind: was Ann putting on a big act for Stephen? She certainly hadn't wished me happiness.

Before I could speak, he said, "I realized today that I was the loser, not she."

"Do you know what you're *saying?*" I demanded.

He took both my hands in his, almost roughly. "You're in my blood, Lissa. But I'll always despise myself for what I did to Ann."

■ ANN CAME into my room the next morning and plopped down in my easy chair. "The atmosphere in this house is worse than a morgue."

I noticed how gaunt her face was, almost homely, and love had so become her! I said, trying for lightness, "I'm not the kind who influences easily."

"No," she said with a dry laugh, "that's my forte." Then, in swift seriousness: "Lissa, I want you and Stephen to be happy without any feeling of guilt. There's no need for it. He thought our companionship was the real thing until he met you."

I felt sick at my misjudgment of her the night before. Ann put on an act? She didn't know how.

She saw how close I was to tears, so she left quickly.

By the atmosphere at the breakfast table next morning, I knew she had cornered our parents and talked some reason into them. There was new blitheness in my world that day. Now, at last, my love for Stephen had no murky shadows; all was sunshine.

Then I came out of the elevator after work and saw Stephen's sister Norma standing in the lobby waiting for me.

She greeted me without smiling. "I want to talk to you, Lissa. Let's have a cocktail across the street. It's a nice quiet place."

I followed her into the cool, dim lounge of the old downtown hotel.

She began without preamble. "Ann is crusading for you and Stephen, and knowing her, I suppose she'll succeed even with Mother and Dad. She never will with me. I'll never forgive you for what you've done to my brother and her. No, don't interrupt; hear me through. You don't know what's it's like to be married to a doctor. You'll never be sure of his company, even of his mealtime. His work will always come first. A girl like you has no place in a doctor's life." She added, with a scornful little laugh, "He should have experienced a few Lissas years ago. Got them out of his system. Then he'd have recognized the true depth of his feeling for Ann."

"I don't have to sit here and be insulted!" I said.

"I'm only telling you the truth," she persisted. "There's one more thing I want you to know—I've never known anyone to be as unhappy as Stephen is right now." She put a bill on the saucer with the check for our untouched drinks and left.

Her last words beat in my brain, louder and louder. And I remembered Stephen's, "I'm the loser."

At the hotel door there was a public telephone. I went into the booth and whirled the dial furiously.

"Dick? I'm bored to death with the 'life is earnest' routine. How about rescuing me?"

"As fast as twelve cylinders can get me there!"

I went into the restroom and repaired my make-up. *I'll cry tomorrow,* I promised my reflection, *but not tonight.*

■ DICK WAS in high spirits as he guided me smoothly over the floor of the Garden Roof. "I told myself all along, *If Lissa is my kind of gal, she'll soon tire of Stephen Blake.* I saw you together a few times and you didn't have much to say to each other."

"The reason they're called the pillars of the throat is because they get so rigid at times."

"What in heaven's name are you talking about?"

"Stephen and I don't talk the same language."

"That's what I said."

"And I'm agreeing."

His arm tightened about me. "Good girl. Now you take us—conversation is small change. We're not laying a cornerstone every time we open our mouths. That's how I like it. You too?"

"Only more so," I answered.

"Then let's get engaged, right now. That makes the one hundredth and first time."

I improvised a laugh and even to me it sounded not too bad. "And the last. I accept."

Dick cried, "This calls for a big celebration!"

Back at our table he put a white velvet box beside my plate. "Prepared for all emergencies," he laughed.

The huge solitaire dazzled me. He took the ring and slipped it on my finger, kissing the tip lightly. It was done with the ease of long experience.

"Why the (*Continued on page 62*)

THAT FATAL

Even her husband's
great love was
not a talisman against
the evil, the darkness
of another man

I crawled to a sitting posture, numb with shock

RIDE

■ IT WAS so wonderful to be Paul and me, to live in our lovely hilltop house with the red rooftops of Palmetto City far below us, to have a super-abundance of health and youth and love.

We fairly romped through the first year of our marriage. We had little more responsibility than we'd had in college. Dad and Mother had left a generous trust fund for me, and Paul had gone straight from college into law partnership with his father.

Our days were splashed with all the colors of the rainbow, our nights were magic.

The afternoon Paul brought Bruce Wade home with him was like any other pleasant day in our lives except for the fuss my cousin Laura made when she saw Bruce, the way she refused to stay to dinner because he was going to be there.

She and I had been playing tennis on the backyard court. While the men mixed drinks downstairs, we went up to my room to change from our tennis shorts. Laura tugged her white pleated skirt in place and zipped it jerkily. Then she snatched up her purse. "Paul's very much mistaken if he thinks I'm going to stay here and be a dinner partner for that lunatic. I declare, Peggy, if he doesn't quit bringing these derelicts home with him you'll both be murdered in your beds some night!"

She was so outraged I couldn't help grinning. Then I sobered. "Look, Laura, one of the reasons I love Paul is because he's so kindhearted, because he cares what happens to people less fortunate than himself and tries to help them whenever he can."

Her face remained stubbornly set. "Some people you can help and some you can't," she answered grimly. "Perhaps Bruce Wade *is* unfortunate, but there's only one place for his kind, and they should never have let him out of it. Believe me, a lot of people have been uneasy since he came back. I've seen him myself, prowling around our neighborhood late at night."

I watched thoughtfully from the bedroom window as she backed her little convertible out of the drive and headed down the hill toward town. She always magnified everything. The months Bruce had spent in a state hospital had been because of a nervous condition. Nothing bad had ever been proved against him. It wasn't fair to persecute him because of a lot of unfounded rumors. He only wandered the streets at night because he couldn't sleep. He'd told Paul all about it.

When I joined them in the living room a few minutes later I said casually, "It's too bad Laura couldn't stay. She'd (*Continued on page* 59)

ONE

It was Cindy's clear, sweet voice I heard

LITTLE PRAYER

The story of a love

so great between a man

and a little girl

that its voice

was carried

across a vast ocean

to give strength

and new faith

to a soldier

fighting for his life

in a foxhole in Korea

■ I DREADED turning the corner of my street. Up there on the third floor of the second house a small face would be watching. I would wave, but there would be no answering wave. She was my little girl, but the vigil she kept was not for me.

At the newsstand I took a paper off the top of the pile.

"News from Korea ain't so good," Sam, the newsdealer, said. "Look at that map, now. Look how they've got 'em squeezed down into a corner."

I looked at the map. Mark, my husband, was there, crowded down into that corner. Sandy hair and blue eyes and a few freckles and a slow grin; when I tried to visualize them his eyes weren't looking into mine, and his grin was not for me.

I read the Korea part on the front page, then turned to the ads for receptionists. Receptionist . . . that was what you called yourself if you were long on looks and short on typing. Last week a woman at one of the agencies had put it rather brutally into words for me. "Where have you worked?" she had asked, and when I told her I had worked at Neopay Novelties before I was married she had scribbled something on my application and said she guessed she hadn't anything I'd be qualified for today. But her tone had said the rest: "Nor any other day."

Neopay Novelties' biggest line was slot machines. Mark had made me promise I'd never work there again, no matter what. And I had promised. But today I had gone there.

They had a new place now at a fancy Fifth Avenue address. All aluminum and bleached wood and deep rugs you stubbed your toe in if you weren't careful. Ben—big, good-looking, middle-aged—had taken the cigar out of his mouth and looked me over, inch by inch. "Kind of let yourself go, haven't you, honey? That suit and those flat shoes and your hair pulled back—know what I mean? The Francie Kelly I used to know wouldn't of been caught dead in a rig like that. You shoulda stuck by me instead of marrying that guy from Iowa." Then he came over and trailed his fingers along my arm. "But you still got what it takes. Never saw a girl in my life had so much of what it takes. It'd be worth real money to Neopay to have a babe like you for the customers to look at when they drop around. Seventy-five bucks a week; how does that sound, honey? We're in the dough. We got a new thing now, pictures. You put your money in and you see these pictures. In some states it's even legal."

Why hadn't I said yes right then? If Ben touched me sometimes I could always slap his hand away the way I used to do in the old days. Maybe if Mark knew how much I needed the money it would be all right. Anything would be all right with him if the money was needed for Cindy. But whether it was all right or not I couldn't go on like this. No peace and no sleep nights and nothing but worry, worry.

A few doors further on was the delicatessen. I went down a couple of steps and opened the door. A little bell jangled and Mrs. Mueller came out from the back where she lived. She smiled when she saw me. "Ach, Mrs. Johnson, it's you. (*Continued on page 48*)

"Why is Cora crying, Daddy,
and why were you kissing her?"

THE CHILD WHO

LIED

If it's your own child, lying can be a major problem; if it's your stepchild, it can be (and in Cora's case was) a tragedy

■ "MY MOMMY IN HEAVEN never made me finish all my milk!" my little stepdaughter wailed.

I felt like shrieking at her, "Well, maybe that's why you were skin and bones!" I was so darned sick of this Mommy-in-Heaven that Dulcie pulled on me every time I made her do something she didn't feel like doing! I tried to smile at her. "There's a surprise waiting in the bedroom for a bottoms-up girl," I prodded.

It worked. The milk was downed and Dulcie was tucked in her bed with the new panda I had hidden under the sheet.

What had happened between us in the short time that had elapsed since I had switched from the role of nursemaid to mother to my husband's child? Was it my fault? Now that she was mine, was I making too many demands on her just to show my husband how well I took care of his daughter? What about the wonderful friendship that had existed between the child and me before I married her father?

It had been only a year ago that I first came to take the job as Dulcie's nurse and, soon after, when the housekeeper left, that job as well. Dulcie had started school by then and didn't require so much attention.

Wesley's deep gratitude had made me uncomfortable. "You don't know how much I appreciate your offer, Cora. You've done wonders with Dulcie. She's so happy with you, so relaxed. You've been a real mother to her."

I was very pleased. I guess I must have been falling in love with him by then. It wasn't hard; he was only twenty-eight, tall and on the lean side, brown-haired and blue-eyed.

I would pretend that I was Mrs. Wesley Forrest and that Dulcie was my child, and as the weeks went by I did actually become one of the family. Long after Dulcie had been put to bed, Wesley and I would sit in the living room and make small, family kind of talk about her, the kind of talk that parents indulge in.

And then it would be time for bed and we would go to our rooms, he to the right of Dulcie's and I to the left. During the night I'd make many unnecessary trips to Dulcie's room to see that she was covered.

It was Christmas week when I first began to notice the whispers and nods in my direction on the street or the significant smiles of the clerks as I went into a neighborhood store. It came as a shock to me, however, when I phoned Mrs. Griffin, one evening when Wesley was away on the last trip of the year, to ask if Olive could sit with the child while I went to the movies.

"I'm sorry, Cora," Mrs. Griffin said, "but I can't have Olive exposed to that kind of situation any longer."

"What do you mean?"

She told me, and in no uncertain terms. Any young woman who kept house for an attractive widower, unchaperoned—

I got it straight, and I was one hot blush when I slammed the receiver down.

I was sobbing face down on the sofa when Wesley came home unexpectedly that evening. I didn't know he was in the room until he was at my side, cradling me in his arms. "Don't cry," he soothed me. "What's wrong, anyway? I shouldn't tell you this, Cora, but I love you. I've loved you for months. Tell me what's happened to make you so unhappy!"

He kissed me gently at first and then less gently as I yielded to my love for him.

I will always cherish in my heart one thought: *He kissed me and told me he loved me before I had unburdened myself to him.* Otherwise, too often, in the face of what happened, I would have had to face the thought that perhaps our marriage had been a marriage of convenience for him.

"Why is Cora crying, Daddy, and why were you kissing her?" a little voice piped.

We broke away to find Dulcie watching us over the back of a chair. I suppose I should have read in her eyes what to expect. There was an almost adult, suspicious look there, but when Wesley told her we were getting married and she would have me for a real mother, she seemed too sleepy to take it in.

No bride could have been happier than I was on the day of the wedding. Mom and Pop and my four brothers and sisters came to the ceremony, and how proud I was to introduce my handsome husband to them! Mom shushed my brother Steve when he said, "Boy, Cora, you sure did come up in the world!" as with a sweep of his hand he indicated the splendor of the home I was to be mistress of.

At the wedding Dulcie seemed as thrilled as I was. She cuddled on either Mom's or Pop's lap whenever one of them sat down. "I'll have a real mommy now, just like all the other children," she kept repeating, and I made a silent vow to be the best possible mother to her.

Mom stayed on to take care of her while Wesley and I went away for a two-day honeymoon, two days and nights that left me starry-eyed.

It was right after we got home that I began to notice the change in Dulcie. Her mouth would tremble every time Wesley kissed me; she hadn't shared her father with anyone for as long as she could remember, and she resented this divided attention. Wesley thought it was funny. "My two wives," he would laugh, but I realized how serious it was to Dulcie and I would whisper to him, "Kiss Dulcie now too."

When he was home, she'd stumble into our room at all hours of the night and stand at the side of the bed, crying pitifully, "Daddy, I'm having a bad dream! Can I sleep next to you?" or, "Daddy, I'm shivering! Can I come into your bed for a little while?"

It got so we never knew when our privacy would be invaded. If Wesley even reached over to turn my face to his for a goodnight kiss, I'd tense up, wondering whether we had an audience. Wesley teasingly told me, "I'm going to get a cowbell arrangement strung up in Dulcie's doorway so we'll at least be warned."

It was about this time that Dulcie reverted to her Mommy-in-Heaven routine. It was something her maternal grandmother kept alive during her yearly visits to the farm out west. She'd used it a lot when I first came to take care of her, but after a while only as a weapon. Now it became ever-present on her tongue. She was hostile, openly rebellious to every suggestion I made, and there was no reaching her, no matter how hard I tried to please her. She even began to look peaked; I was worried about her.

I finally called Mom long distance and poured out my troubles to her. Her advice was, "Just sit it out, Cora. Poor baby, she needs your love more than ever now and yet she keeps fighting it. Just go on loving her and overlooking as much as you can. Explain over and over to her that her daddy loves you both and that you both love her. Don't worry about her not eating much; when she's hungry she'll eat."

But try as I might, I made no headway.

Wesley and Dulcie went for a walk one Sunday while I prepared dinner. I was so intent on arranging a centerpiece on the dining room table that I didn't even look up when they returned, but asked, "Back so soon? Dinner won't be ready for half an hour." I looked up when the silence in the room seemed to thicken, to see Wesley's unsmiling face. His eyes on me, he said quietly to Dulcie, "Go up to your room and don't come down until I call you."

She trotted up the stairs obediently, eyes straight ahead, never turning until she came to the top landing, when she peered over the stair rail at us. I thought there was a smile at the corners of her mouth. I turned and faced Wesley again, puzzled.

"I'd like to hear the truth about something Dulcie has told me," he said. "She says you entertain a man here while I'm away."

I stared at him. "A man? That's not true! You know what an imaginative child Dulcie is; she's made it up. Wesley, you don't seriously believe—"

He said, more quietly, "But this kind of story is not one that a child her age would make up. It's too adult."

"Wesley," I pleaded earnestly, "let me talk to her." I went to the foot of the stairs. "Dulcie," I called, "come down here. I want to talk to you."

She was perched on the top step. She came down and stood before us, her blue eyes bland and innocent. I got down on my knees before her and faced her squarely. "Dulcie," I said very quietly, trying to repress every bit of emotion, "the story you told Daddy about the man has made us both very unhappy. You didn't mean it, did you?"

Very seriously she nodded her head.

"This is terribly important, Dulcie!" I said. "Tell your daddy the truth. You just made up the story. Isn't that so?"

She shrugged herself free of my hands on her shoulders. Her clear, trusting eyes never wavered from mine as she shook her head. Then she spoke. "After you and the man drank some whiskey, he said, 'You sure have pretty legs, sister,' and you picked up your skirt and showed him your knees and said, 'And dimpled knees.' And then the man took a quarter out of his pocket and said, 'Kid, buy yourself some ice cream,' and I went down to Graham's candy store and I was very careful when I crossed the street, just like you said."

Wesley sank limply into the nearest chair. He sat there, knees apart, head bent low, his fingers running through his hair. Dulcie turned to him, her lips trembling as though to say more. Then her face and eyes seemed to harden, and she solemnly trotted up the stairs without a backward glance.

It might have been the tears that were wrung from my heart, the sincerity of my tone and the candor with which I could look into Wesley's eyes that finally convinced him that I was telling the truth when I dismissed this lurid story as a product of the brain of an over-imaginative child. Or did I really convince him? All I know is that the quality of oneness was gone between my husband and myself.

■ DULCIE AND I were poles apart from that day on. She was my mortal enemy, this baby, and, God help me, I never failed to show her my hostility. It's hard to put into words my failure as a mother. How could I ever have permitted myself, a mature person, to pit myself against this child? But she had declared war and I met her on equal terms.

She was well taken care of physically, but that was all. There was a hot breakfast waiting for her each morning. She had a freshly starched little dress to wear to school. But even when she made overtures to me, I rejected her.

Ours was a lonely home; Dulcie and I both lived for the week ends when Wesley came home and we could declare a truce. You can imagine how excited I was, therefore, the day a friend from my own home town phoned to say that she and her boy friend were driving out for the day.

Dulcie loved company, so she and I sat expectantly on the edge of the plumped-up sofa cushions, waiting for their arrival, and both flew to the door when the doorbell rang.

Sophie's brother, Jeff, had come along too. They were all impressed with my lovely home, and they had the same awed reaction to blond little Dulcie that all dark-eyed and dark-haired people have.

We had a wonderful time. Dulcie was as cute as a button all through dinner. At a time like this my resentment toward her was forgotten. We all escorted her up to bed and tucked her in, and for the first time in weeks, I kissed her goodnight.

Later we lit a fire in the fireplace. Jeff fixed drinks and then sat down at the piano. I sat alongside of him, humming the tunes he was playing, while Sophie and Walt occupied the sofa. Although my back was to them, I could tell that he was kissing her.

On this scene, Wesley walked in.

Whenever he'd been away on a trip, he came home laden with presents for Dulcie and me. Generally I'd rush at him, too eager to feel his arms about me to wait for him to get rid of his packages. He'd drop them right where he stood and swoop me up in his arms. I ran to him tonight, then stopped. The cold blue fire in his eyes held me off.

I took a quick look over my shoulder and I could see the scene as it must have looked to him when he came through the door. It was almost a replica of the story Dulcie had told him about me:

Walt's arms about Sophie on the couch, Jeff at the piano, with me by his side, highball glasses containing our best Scotch near at hand.

Please, please, Wesley, don't start anything now, I prayed silently as I felt the muscles in his arm tense under my hand. "I want you to meet my friends," I said, my voice quavering despite my attempt to keep it even.

Wesley kept his arms firmly about his packages. He nodded curtly, said, "Goodnight. I'm tired. I hope you have a good time." Into his next sentence went all the sordid implications he could pack: "I'll call you from the station next time, Cora."

Sophie and the men made hurried goodbyes, and for a long time after they left I sat in front of the coffee table, unable to make the move to clean up the remnants of my sad little party.

■ IT WAS only after I had finally dragged myself upstairs that I realized how serious the situation was. Wesley had moved his things into the guest room. My harmless party had substantiated what his daughter had told him; he had shown that he wanted no further explanations from me.

I thought I knew what I must do. Quietly I packed my suitcase, went down the stairs. There was no need to leave a note. I just walked out of the house. . . .

My trip to my mother's was like a horrible dream. The mile walk in the bitter cold to the railroad station, the four-hour wait for the train, and the unshed tears that pressed nearer and nearer to the surface, threatening to overwhelm me before I reached the refuge of Mother's protective arms.

Mom heard me out and comforted me while I cried until I was spent; then she said, "It seems to me you're running away from something you should have faced."

"But to have Wesley take her word against mine!" The tears came anew.

Wesley didn't call, though I was sure he'd guess where I'd gone. The telephone sat on its table like a monster, black and evil and terribly silent. When its call rang through the little house, a cold tremor would run up my spine and I would stand transfixed, waiting to be summoned, but it was never for me. Twice a day when the postman made his calls my heart would nearly stop beating while I listened for the clank of the mailbox flap. Letters came, but never for me.

Mom and Pop were beginning to worry about me. They shook their heads over my lack of appetite, my inability to sleep. I wanted to comfort them, but no words could come from my heart, only tears. I no longer looked in the mirror; I couldn't stand the wan face that looked back at me.

It was my eleven-year-old sister Rosy who took the telephone call from Wesley that I had been waiting two months for. Panting for breath, she met me halfway home from the library, where I had gone to find forgetfulness. Her voice was shrill with fright. "I've been looking all over for you. A call came from your husband. He's in trouble with the police and you're to go right home!"

I raced home, Rosy's shorter legs trying to keep up with mine. There was a train leaving at ten-fifteen, I found. Hurriedly I threw my nightclothes and a change of dress into my overnight bag.

Mom and Pop walked in just then and Rosy and I both started to explain about the phone call.

"Why don't you call up first?" Mom asked. "Maybe Rosy got the message wrong."

I hadn't even thought of it. All I knew was that Wesley needed me and I must get back home quickly.

Fifteen minutes later Mrs. Stanley, who shared our party line, was still going strong over the phone. I could have asked her to let me make my call, but I knew my request would mean an open invitation for this town gossip to listen in on my call, and with Wesley involved with the police I dared not risk it. When she finally got off the phone, the long distance operator reported a busy signal at the other end. I only had fifteen minutes left. Either Dad would drive me to the station right away or I would have to wait for a morning train. I chose to take the train.

■ THE SIX-HOUR RIDE stretched out endlessly. I tried to force myself to remain calm as my tortured mind conjured up new visions of what might have happened to Wesley. Even as I dismissed one wild guess after another, the wheels beneath me endlessly droned, *The police, the police, the police.* It could only mean something terrible.

To give myself something to do, I spent

three-quarters of an hour in the washroom rouging my cheeks and lips, endlessly brushing my hair until it shone again, but I was not seeing myself in the mirror before me. I was staring right through it. Even here I couldn't escape the endless litany of the wheel upon rail, that sounded so like the clanking of a jail door closing behind Wesley.

I consulted my wristwatch. Twenty minutes more, then ten minutes for a cab to reach our house. Now the time began to grow too short. What would I have to face when I got home? I forced the tears back. Agitated as I was, I wanted Wesley to see me looking as good as I possibly could.

There was a policeman seated at our dining room table when I let myself into the house with my key. I had to brace myself against the door before I could take another step. Even before the mist before my eyes cleared, a small figure had catapulted itself against me. Little arms were around me and Dulcie was shrieking "Mommy's home! Daddy, Mommy's home!"

Oh, it was good to feel her arms around me! I picked her up to kiss her and even amidst the terror and confusion that plagued me, I thought, *She's lost weight. She's as light as a feather.* Then, with Dulcie still in my arms, hanging around my neck, we were both enveloped in Wesley's arms and his kiss was sweet.

It was the policeman who spoke first. He cleared his throat to get our attention, then said, "Well, all the evidence points to the fact that this is Mrs. Forrest, but I still need proof for headquarters. Have you any identification?"

It was bewildering. For a moment I simply stood there; then I pulled my driver's license out of my bag. "What's this all about?" I asked.

Hardly meeting my eyes, Wesley explained, "It's too ridiculous. The police thought I had done away with you and hidden the body."

"Listen, Mr. Forrest," the policeman protested. "We have to check complaints." He turned to me. "We got a call from one of your neighbors, saying that your daughter had told her about some weird goings-on in your house. The kid said you were tied down to your bed in your room and weren't allowed to come out. You weren't seen around, so we checked up. You weren't here and when we asked your husband he said you'd left him. With the kid's story floating around, we had to get to the bottom of the thing. We asked Mr. Forrest to produce you."

At this point Dulcie buried her head on my shoulder and began to cry. "They all teased me that my mommy had gone away,. so I told them you were really here but couldn't leave your room. And I was afraid to tell Daddy that it was all my fault that you had gone away."

The policeman shook his head. "Can you believe a kid that age would make up a story like that? She ought to be writing for the movies."

Dulcie was sobbing wildly now. Wesley took her from me and stood her on her feet. He wasn't gentle, either. "What do you mean that it was all your fault that Mommy had gone away? Stop that crying at once, Dulcie, and look at me!"

She made an effort to stop weeping, but the story she told us was punctuated with sobs. "Mommy really didn't have a man visit her. I told that story about her because I thought she was mean to me, making me go to bed early and finish all my milk, and—and I wanted us to be alone again, Daddy. My nurse used to have men visit her when she was taking care of me and she told me not to tell you or you'd make her go away. When I got mad at Mommy I told you the story that really happened when my nurse was here. And now I want Mommy to stay with us forever and ever, and never go away again!"

She was crying even louder now than before, and when Wesley released her she fled up the stairs to her room. I wanted to run after her, to soothe and comfort her, but it was Wesley who broke down now. When the policeman made his exit, Wesley muttered brokenly, "God, what a fool I've been! What a stupid, blundering fool! Can you ever forgive me for not believing in you, Cora?"

I pulled him down on the sofa, and when he tried to speak again I silenced him with my mouth against his. "Don't say another word, darling," I murmured. "Just love me."

Fiercely he pulled me to him and kissed me until all the ice that had formed about my heart dissolved and I felt alive and human and wanted again. We sat there for a long time, his arms about me and mine about him, without saying a word. . . .

We are a real family now, with ties fully cemented by the fire of our suffering. I've been taught never to run out on my heart again. Wesley has learned that faith is the better part of love—and a chastened Dulcie now carefully labels the stories her imagination still creates either "make-believe" or "real." *The End*

I'M THROUGH WITH HATE

★ AT LONG LAST HE LEARNED THE MAGIC PASSWORDS TO HAPPINESS: "KEEP YOUR FACE

■ IT WAS the kind of early spring day when no boy can feel content cooped up in a yard. Mom's tulips splashed gay color against the white walls of our small house. Ivy and Ida, the twins, shook the sides of their playpen, trying to climb out. "Buzz-buzz," Ida complained.

"Buzz-buzz," Ivy agreed.

I paused a moment to watch them. The sun lit their hair until it looked like newly-polished copper.

"Poddy-ow diddum." Ivy had given up trying to escape; she was piling blocks into a tin can.

"Umly," Ida replied.

This was "twin talk," used to exclude Dad, Mom and me from their private world. Each was completely engrossed in the other. Sometimes it amused me, but today I walked away in disgust. Why couldn't they have been boys, and big enough to amount to something?

In the kitchen, Mom was mixing a batch of cookies. She did her housework like a little girl playing house, like it was a glad kind of game. There was a stew bubbling on the cook-stove and pans of biscuits on the warming oven, ready to bake. Over by the window the round table with its blue and white checked cloth was laid for the noon meal. I could smell the stew and the pine lumber scraps in the wood box and the cinnamon geranium that stood against the sun-warmed window-pane.

"Mom," I said, taking a handful of raisins from a pan, "I wanta go down to the boat dock."

"Right now?" she said. "With cookies in the making?"

I nodded. "It's the kind of a day for it. You know."

She smiled at me. Oh, she was mighty handsome, Mom was. "Yes, son, I know. Run along, then, but get back in time. Your dad doesn't have to work today. Maybe he'll take us into town."

There was the usual assortment of waiting boats at the dock. Sometimes I sat in one of them and pretended I was lost at

MR
Book-Length Novel
Emmy's eyes were black with terror. "My father cut me with—with a butcher knife"
ALWAYS TOWARD THE SUNSHINE AND THE SHADOWS WILL FALL BEHIND YOU"

sea. Today I ignored them. At the far end of the dock was a sailboat. I knelt on the splintery boards of the dock and looked down on the boat and her master.

"Hello," he said. "I'm just taking a circle. Care to come along?"

I had promised time and again never to go out in a boat with a stranger, but from the first look into those twinkling blue eyes of Charlie Murphy he ceased to be a stranger.

He reached up for me. I put my hand in his and jumped, felt the boat rock ever so easy under my feet. He showed me where to sit, how to hold on, and we were off, on magic wings.

After the sail, I invited Charlie home with me. He shook his head. "Your mom wouldn't like it, a stranger coming in right at mealtime."

"You just don't know my mom," I bragged. "There's stew and biscuits," I added hopefully.

"Well, now I'm plumb tempted." He grinned. "Tell you what: I'll do my tricks. Bark, roll over, sit up and beg. That ought to earn any dog a biscuit, huh?"

I laughed and then I remembered something. "I wasn't supposed to go sailing," I confessed uneasily.

He frowned, rubbing his jaw with his hand. "In that case, we're both sinners," he said, "because I should've known not to take you without asking your folks. It was all so natural and easy, I just didn't think."

"You s'pose I ought to tell 'em?" I asked.

"Yes, Dave, reckon you ought. I've learned from past experience that when your conscience is clear you can eat a heap more biscuits."

I saw what he meant, because right then, when I knew we would tell, something untied in my stomach and I felt a lot better.

We walked home and I opened the kitchen door. "I'm back, Mom," I announced. "I want you to meet my friend, Charlie Murphy."

She looked up from tying Ivy's bib. She began one of her warm, friendly smiles, then stopped in the middle of it, like she'd forgot to finish.

Charlie, clutching his white duck cap in his hands, raised it quickly to cover his heart, as though it was a shield. "I'm glad to know you, ma'am," he mumbled, without a trace of his friendly grin.

Suddenly, much to my relief, Mom was herself again. "How do you do, Charlie Murphy. Come right on in." With the quickness that was natural with her, she stepped to the door opening onto the side porch, calling to Dad, "Come on, Tom. Davy's brought company." Then she was back at the cookstove, opening the oven, drawing out the biscuits.

Dad came in off the porch, drying his hands on a towel. His damp iron-gray hair still showed the path of a comb. He had changed from his carpenter's overalls to the dark trousers and blue shirt he wore around home and to town. I saw his interested eyes go to Charlie's face.

It was mutual liking from the start. Charlie might have been sitting at our table for years. The twins gave him smiles and flirted their feathery eyelashes at him.

"What's your trade?" Charlie asked Dad, winking at me to let me know it was a bit too soon to mention sailing.

Dad brought out his staple joke. "Carpenter by trade, Carpenter by name."

"Well, now," Charlie exclaimed, "*there's* something I've yet to try. I've cooked and sailored and soldiered; I've punched cattle and worked in the mines. Even had a shoe shop once. I keep thinking I'll find what I was cut out to do. Always tackling something different, and then, after I get the knack of it, I don't want to do it any more. You reckon I'm just a no-good?"

Dad pondered the question, forgetful of the food on his plate. "No," he answered in his slow, deliberate way. "I can't see that that would make a man no good. Take me, now. You might say I was born into my trade. My grandfather was a carpenter. He used to bring waste-ends home to me, and long as I can remember I've known the feel of wood and the need to shape it into something useful. But say things had been different, and I'd never known Grandad. I might have wasted half my life hunting my trade. Worse than that, I might never have had the courage to hunt it."

The conversation interested me as no grown-up talk ever had before, but Mom's eyes had a faraway look.

It was nearly sundown when Charlie rose to go. "By Jingo," he grinned, "but I have enjoyed this day!"

"And so have I." Dad rose and put his pipe away on the shelf. "Are you staying here? You'll be around?"

Charlie shook his head. "I never know. Tell you what I was aiming to do, though. I own a piece of big timber, as pretty a chunk of the Rockies as you'll ever see. I bought it once when I had some cash burning my pocket and then I never knew what to do with it. Now it seems they've built a sawmill almost at the roots of my trees, which means I can really cash in. I ought to go see about it."

"Well, man, I'd say so!" Dad exclaimed.

So then the talk started again. Mom got up and put the twins to bed, the sun went down, the lamp was lit. But Dad and Charlie didn't seem to know.

"I'll need a partner," Charlie said.

"That's true," Dad agreed. "A man can't work at a thing that big alone. Margaret, where are my maps?"

Mom brought them from the closet shelf and Dad spread several open on the table. "Here we are, right here, son," he said to me, pointing to a black dot next to the blue that was supposed to be the Pacific.

"Yeah, I know," I nodded. I was yawning by now. I crawled in behind the cookstove finally, where I wouldn't be noticed and sent to bed, and lay down. With the warmth from the stove spread over me like a blanket, I dozed, but scraps of conversation made their way through to me at times, like Dad saying, "I don't know as my old car could make those steep roads," and Charlie laughing, "I can make any car go anywhere. I was a mechanic in a garage once."

And, another time, Dad saying, "I just don't know. Margaret, what do you think?"

"It's up to you," Mom answered.

When Charlie finally left, Dad dragged me out by the heels and sent me to bed.

■ CHARLIE SOLD his sailboat and Dad finished the building job he had started. As Mom's tulips finished blooming I dug them up. Then one day, loaded complete from twins to teakettle, we were ready. Charlie had advised us to take all we could, since the sawmill was located far from town, so Dad had decided to ship what we needed by rail as far as it would go and haul our immediate necessities along in the car.

I remember even the little details of that trip that carried us north and east into the high country. Things like Ivy and Ida refusing to look forward like the rest of us. They stood up in the back seat and peered out the back window, that had long ago lost its glass. Every time we hit a bump they fell down. Then they poked their fingers through the isinglass side curtains and broke off bits to chew, screaming when Mom forced them to spit it out. Dad and Charlie, changing off at driving, were worn out with the noise. But as long as the car kept rolling in the right direction, Charlie was full of rollicking good humor, telling jokes and stories, singing ballads. "Wait till I get my accordion up here," he promised. "I'll set the pines to dancing. Every squirrel and chickadee and rock chuck for miles around will come to our parties."

About noon we stopped on the main street of a lumber mill town. The general store was also the post office. There was a barber shop, a saloon and a theater that was called Dreamland.

"Here it is," Charlie grinned. "We're just twenty-one miles from home right now. Let's go in, Tom, and see if the stuff we sent on ahead has arrived. At least I hope the tent came, so your womenfolk will have a place to sleep tonight."

"You and the youngsters better stay here for the night," Dad said to Mom. "We'll go up and look it over."

Mom laughed. "You're not ditching *me* just as the fun starts."

The storekeeper came out, his bald head shining under the straps of his green celluloid eyeshade, and looked us over. "So yer goin' up the mountain? Most ever'body does these days. It's just a fad . . . won't last. The real future is right here. They got quite a place up there, though. That Cane, he's put up a fine mill, and half the population of the town has moved up there to work. But it won't last. Too short a season. Som'pn' I c'n do fer ya?"

Our tent was there, and adding that and a few groceries and Dad's carpenter tools to the overloaded car, we set out for "home," our spirits high.

At the end of the first ten miles we had to leave some of our belongings by the roadside to lighten the load and for the next mile or two the pulls were so steep that Mom, Charlie and I would get out and walk. Finally Charlie said we were at the top, with a downhill grade the rest of the way. Just then we came around a sharp bend and Dad slammed the brakes on so suddenly the twins fell to the floor. A boulder had rolled from the mountainside and stopped dead center of the narrow road. A few more feet and it would have crashed on down through the aspens, for the road was only a scratch on the mountain's face. Anyway, there we were, blocked off.

Dad and Charlie climbed out and tried to pry the rock from the road with a couple of aspen poles but it didn't budge. Suddenly Charlie raised his pole and brought it down across the boulder with a ferocious blow. Then he used some words that made my mother cover her ears.

"Pipe down, Charlie," Dad said. "There's ladies present."

Charlie stopped swearing. He laid one hand on the boulder and spoke through his teeth. "Look, you rock, you're in my way, and you're going to move. Now."

He knelt and, bracing one foot against a pine, laid his shoulder to the rock and shoved. His face turned red, then purple, and Dad shouted, "For Pete's sake, quit before you bust something!" Then he saw the boulder give, and hastened to use his pry. The boulder rolled, settling itself at the very edge of the road. Our way was clear.

Charlie lay flat for a moment, getting his wind back. When he got into the car Mom said with a twinkle in her eyes, "So Cheerful Charlie has a temper!"

He turned and met her gaze squarely. "Yes," he admitted, "and it's my master. But at times it serves me. When some-

thing stands between me and my desire, my temper finds a way to move it."

The sawmill was situated on West Creek in an open park, circled by spruce. As Dad stopped the car a man came from around a stack of curing lumber and walked toward us. The door of the nearest cabin opened just a crack and a child looked out at us. "Shut the door, Em," the man called. To Dad he said, "I'm Cane. What do you want?"

Dad explained, introducing himself, Mom and Charlie. I looked at Cane and felt dislike grow in me. His face might have been carved in gray granite. His hair was gray, his eyes were gray and a bristle of gray beard covered his jaw.

"You a family man?" Dad asked.

"Yes," Cane answered, stepping back from the car. "Bring me your timber when you get lined up. Goodnight."

"Well, by Jingo!" Charlie chuckled, motioning for Dad to follow a faint trail that wound out around the buildings. "He looks like the wrath of God times seven, don't he?"

"What kind of people do they grow up here, anyhow?" Dad demanded angrily.

"Search me," Charlie answered. "When I was here six years ago it was just me and the land shark. No shacks, no people. Go right around this strip of spruce now, Tom, and we're on my land. Angle off toward the creek and we'll make camp."

We entered another and much smaller park. There was no trail here; the car jolted and lurched through the grass to the edge of the stream. We all got out and Charlie chose a safe spot for a fire and built one. In no time the flames leaped up to guard us against the strange mysteries of this new world. "Now, you just set tight till I get back," he said. "I'll get a truck and go after our stuff. 'Twon't take long."

The twins fell asleep in the back of the car, covered with Mom's coat. Dad rolled a log up close to the fire and we hunkered there. The moon was at first quarter and high in the sky, giving enough light for us to look out across the park and see the outline of another mountain range, still snow capped.

"Like it, Margaret?" Dad asked Mom, his arm holding her close.

"I do," Mom said. "In spite of Cane, I like it. I'm wondering if Charlie would sell us a few acres right about here. I believe the ground would be perfect for tulips."

"No doubt it would," Dad nodded. "And a house wouldn't cost much here. For once we could have enough room. Say a big long living room with windows looking out at this view. And a fireplace. I've never tried my hand at one, but I'll wager Charlie has. As for tulips, you can have them by the acre."

And so we began our new life. . . .

■ BEFORE the summer was over I had seen what a road crew could make of a rugged mountain trail. Trucks were soon rolling from Cane's mill to the railroad with high grade lumber. I became familiar with winches and chutes and the timber lingo of the men who made up Charlie's crew. I knew the pungent smell of pine and balsam, and the music of West Creek.

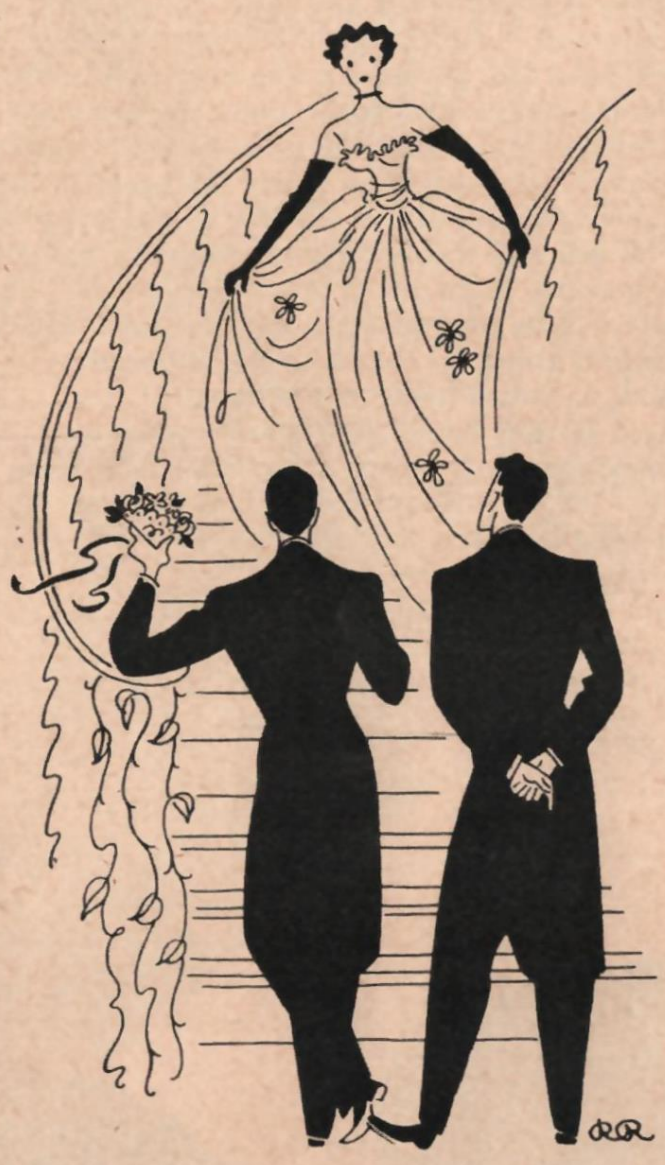
And before the summer was over, I had met Emmy Cane.

In a settlement as small as ours, where we knew not only our neighbors' first names but called their dogs by name as well, it was nothing short of a miracle the way the Canes managed to live apart from us. Mrs. Swenson, whose husband was a grader at the mill, told Mom, "It's downright queer. I waited when we moved here for Mrs. Cane to call. Time went by and I thought, *Well, maybe she's ailing.* So I took a fresh-baked loaf and walked over there. The little girl opened the door to me just a crack and stood peeking out, like a rat in a bin. 'Mama is sick,' she says to me. 'You can't come in.' With that she shut the door in my face."

"We saw the little girl," Mom said. "The night we came she was looking out at us, and Cane told her to shut the door."

"Yes, he would!" Mrs. Swenson dipped a handful of soft soap from a bucket and rubbed it into a shirt collar. Then she turned the collar down and ground it against the washboard ridges. "I feel sorry for the girl, and that's a fact. I've tried to talk to her at times when I've met her at the store but she's mum as an oyster. Scared of her old man, I guess."

It was the morning I went downstream to look for the moose ponds that I met her. It was still early when I reached them and



to my joy a cow moose, up to her back in willows, was browsing. As she moved from one clump of willows to another I saw that her calf was with her and I remembered Dad saying, "You have to watch out for the cows. They'll kill to defend their young."

I began walking backward, moving very slowly, wanting to get a tree between myself and the moose. Suddenly the cow raised her head, made a low, grunting call to her calf and gazed in my direction. At the same moment I became aware of someone standing beside me. I dared not turn my head, but from the corner of my eye I could see a girl in faded dungarees. Her black hair was clipped in a ragged bang across her brow. She had a face that was little and shy. Somehow I knew she was Emmy Cane.

"Don't move," she whispered. "She sees us!"

"I was trying to get behind a tree," I whispered back.

"It's too late. Just don't move."

It took courage to stand there while the cow approached, making strange sounds deep in her throat. She stopped within a few feet of us, uncertain.

Emmy, still in a whisper, began to pray, "God, don't let her kill us. Make her blind. Make her as blind as Mama. Please, God, make her blind, so she can't see us!"

After what seemed an endless time, the cow flicked her long, funneled ears, turned and lumbered away.

I drew a deep breath into my emptied lungs and Emmy sank to the ground as though her legs had melted. "God answered my prayer."

"You really think He struck her blind?" I queried. "You think a prayer could work that way?"

"Of course!" Her eyes were glowing. "My father prayed that Mama would be blind and she is."

I pulled my jackknife from my pocket and set the blades for mumblety-peg. "Why would he pray for a thing like that?"

"He says she sinned and he asked God to punish her with blindness. It has something to do with me, I think, but I don't know what." She leaned forward to watch my knife. "Show me how," she begged.

"We'd better go upstream a way first," I said. "Out of moose territory."

■ THE NEXT WEEK, Dad, Mr. Swenson and two other family men began work on a schoolhouse, much to the aggravation of the Swenson boys and me. They chose lightweight logs for the sides, and Mr. Cane grudgingly agreed to donate rough lumber for the floor and roof. He said it was too big a building, but Dad stuck to his plans. "We need a building for community affairs," he insisted. "We can have dances and parties, and on Sundays the womenfolk can hold Sunday School for the kids. And when the weather's bad, there'll be room to play indoors."

He got his way, and the state sent us a teacher, Christine Adams. As Charlie said, she was "pretty as party trimmings and as full of spirits as a payday miner." Mom liked her and invited her to board with us.

"She's a flirt," Charlie teased. "She'll steal your man."

"She's welcome to one of my men," Mom laughed.

"Oh, come, now!" he scowled. "You wouldn't wish a scatterbrain like Christine onto poor Tom."

"I wasn't thinking of Tom," Mom said, not smiling now.

Charlie sobered too. "No, Margaret, I'm afraid you weren't."

I didn't understand what they were talking about, but I did like Christine. We had one thing in common: Charlie was the sun in our little universe. Christine made no bones about being head over heels in love with him. After a bit, though, when Charlie kept right on treating her like a kid sister, she stopped talking about him, and there was a hurt look deep in her eyes.

I kept up my friendship with Emmy. In school she stood apart from the rest of us. The Swenson boys made fun of her. They snickered when she couldn't recite. Her written lessons were always perfect, but she could not speak out in class.

"For gosh sakes, what're you scared to talk for?" I demanded once. "You talk to *me*."

"I know," she nodded, "but I trust you. In school, if I said something I shouldn't, my father might find out, and not let me go any more."

But away from school she had a light and joyous spirit (*Continued on page 82*)

CABIN DATE

Do boys care if you're good?

■ THE BATTERED OLD CAR that brought us up from the station stopped at the gate we had been looking for, a peeled-log gate with "Hayes" on it in neat black letters. Greg jumped out and reached a hand to me. I wished that I could stumble gracefully as I got out and fall into his arms, the way they do in old-fashioned books, but I left it at wishful thinking and stepped down in the usual way.

The driver set our bags on the grass, accepted his fare and rattled back to the village. All you could hear was the far call of a bird and the rustling of some bushes by the roadside.

"Well, here we are," said Greg, "and four hours before Claire and Bill get here."

"Wasn't it nice of them," I said, "to suggest that we take the morning train up rather than miss a whole afternoon of our week end?"

"Niceness," he said, stooping for the bags, "is a family characteristic. Take a good look at yours truly."

He was Claire Hayes' cousin and had come to our town only a couple of months before to be Bill's partner in the box factory. Bill and Claire were comparative newcomers too, not quite accepted by Midville yet. Everybody thought they were a bit too casual about some things and a faint aura of disapproval followed them. Perhaps it was this unconcern about routine things that I liked about them. Anyway, our friendship seemed to be taken for granted. That was what gave me the inside track when Greg came and half the girls in town were trampling all over one another to make the first grab at him. I had no way of judging whether it was because Greg liked me for myself or whether I was a sort of protection for him while he looked around to see what kind of girls Midville had to offer, but when Claire and Bill asked me to go up to the mountains for a week end, I was five-feet-four of quivering anticipation. A whole week end with Greg. Seeing him first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Breakfast with him, so much more intimate a meal than lunch or dinner. And all the lovely hours between.

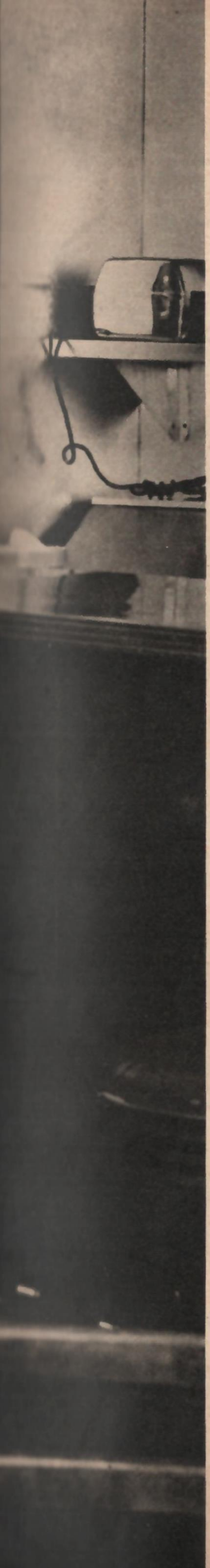
Then, at the eleventh hour, something went wrong with Bill's car. The garage said they couldn't possibly have it fixed before one o'clock Saturday, so Claire suggested that Greg and I go on up by the morning train.

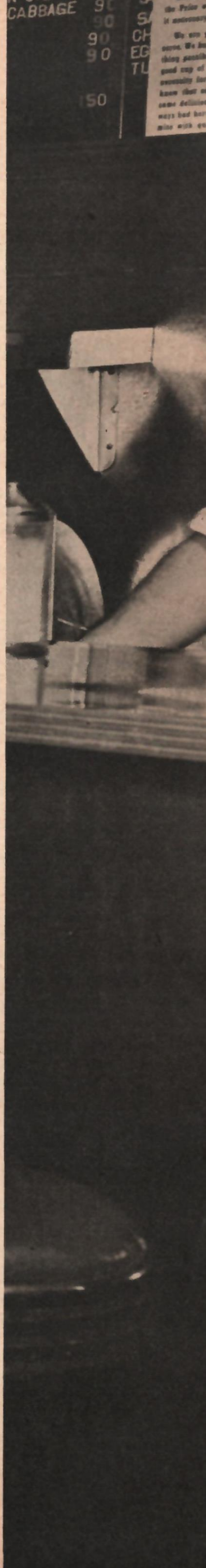
Mother wasn't very happy about my starting off with Greg in advance of my host and hostess, but all she said when (*Continued on page 78*)

There was growing enchantment
about this hour together, with only
an interested squirrel looking on

Maybe it was all planned, but
just as Ina put down the dime,
Gus handed her a Cellophane
package with nylons in it

ONE KISS FOR PAY





★ **A schoolgirl sobs out**
a bitter story
that answers a question
so many girls have yet to
ask themselves

■ IF IT HADN'T BEEN for Marcia Andrews saying what she did at the bus stop that afternoon, I might have told Denis how things were at the beginning, but when Marcia showed me how everyone felt about those of us who live across the river, I knew I couldn't tell, ever.

It was late September, an Indian summer day with a touch of magic in it. A gang from the high school was waiting at the intersection when Bert Simpson asked about Bowman Street.

"Where is Bowman Street?" he asked. "This bus says Bowman Street, but I never see anybody get on it."

Marcia gave a brittle, derisive laugh. "Bowman Street is across the river. We call it Packer's Row because it's really a slum. Nobody lives there but bums."

Suddenly my hand turned to ice under Denis' warm touch. Things had been so right a moment before. Now I felt contaminated by Marcia's words. She had said that only bums live on Packer's Row. That's what I would be to the others if they knew.

I wanted to explain to Denis, but how could I, with everybody listening?

I watched him and the others pile into the Rumley Hills bus; then I began to walk toward home.

Ina, a girl from my part of town, caught up with me.

"What's eatin' you?" she asked. When I didn't answer immediately, she added, "You have to tell 'em sometime," but there was understanding in her voice. That was why I felt a bond between Ina and me; she understood how I hated Bowman Street. She knew what it was to fight the red sand as it swirled up from the river; she knew how impossible it was to brush away the poverty that clung tighter to us than the grassburrs and sticktights that grew along the river.

When I got home I started straightening up the house. Perhaps things weren't really so bad. After the kids at school saw that I was just like the rest of them, maybe it wouldn't matter to them that I didn't have nice things and live in a nice part of town. I hadn't had time to really get to know anybody, except Denis.

Since that day when I had rushed out of the library and collided with him in the hall, I had felt that excited, wonderful feeling about him.

He had helped me work my algebra during study period, a little shyly at first, and I had helped him with his composition, and it had got so I thought of Denis almost all the time, even when I had promised myself I wouldn't.

At supper time I fixed a sandwich and sat at the table alone, and I wondered how it would be, sitting across the table from Denis. At bedtime when Mom was home from work and she and Bucky, my stepfather, argued about her drinking, I thought, *Things won't be like this for Denis and me.*

(Continued on page 108)

■ I PARKED ten feet from the entrance to the State Bank, left the key in the ignition with the motor idling gently, picked up my knitting bag, got out and dropped a nickel in the parking meter. My wrist-watch said quarter past twelve. I ran my eyes over the rented car, a black '48 sedan, its fenders and license plates plastered with mud, checked to be sure that the knitting needles and ball of green wool were sticking out of the bag, adjusted my purse under my arm and my veil over my eyes and walked into the bank that I intended to rob.

The bank was busy with a noontime crowd, most of them men, which suited my purpose, since there must be at least three men in the immediate vicinity. Having checked on that, I selected the longest line leading to a cashier's window and joined the end of it. It was important that there should be no one behind me to look over my shoulder. Waiting, I kept my head slightly lowered and my eyes on the tweed-jacketed back of the man in front of me.

Automatically I glanced at my watch and at that unlucky moment the man turned around. "In a hurry?" he asked pleasantly. "Take my place in line."

Startled, I glanced up. He was in his early thirties, tall and distinguished-looking, with a lean, dark face.

"Please," he insisted courteously. "I have plenty of time."

I didn't know what to do about it. Basic intelligence seemed to have deserted me. Like a mechanical doll whose mechanism suddenly runs down in mid-step, I stood completely paralyzed.

My blank unresponsive stare must have alarmed him because he said, "I beg your pardon but you seem—are you feeling ill?"

Frightened was more the sensation! Conscious that I was bungling, attracting attention to myself, I was helpless to know how to handle this simple situation. The penetrating dark eyes of the stranger were now focused on me in the most intent concentration. A fog of nervous perspiration broke out on my forehead. Was it more than coincidence that he seemed to be probing my mind? In sudden panic, I bolted. Turned abruptly and fled.

I hadn't taken three steps before his voice stopped me dead. "Just a minute, please!"

Command in the tone. Something inside me quivered. Slowly I turned. The smile had gone from the man's face. His narrowed eyes studying me, he suddenly thrust out his arm. I looked down, half expecting to see a (*Continued on page 97*)

A fiction story could not be more lurid, but this one is— THE TRUTH

PUTTY

A FORBIDDEN.

Leo's hands massaged my neck, his wonderfully soothing voice whispered: "Darling, put your mind at rest"

IN HIS HANDS

SECRET POWER HAS AN EXCITEMENT NOTHING ELSE CAN HAVE

A MODERN ROMANCES NOVELETTE

"You've had a few too many, haven't you, sister?"

You've got to be worth loving before love comes

WHAT LONELY WOMEN DO

to you. True or False?

■ MY MOTHER'S theory of life was a simple one. You married a man for better or worse, for richer or poorer. He was yours and you were his and that's all there was to it.

It hadn't been that simple for me. Marriage to Hank had been seven long years in which I'd known I loved him much more than he'd ever loved me. I remembered too well the things I'd done in my futile attempt to hold his fickle love. And then came the war, and his return, when I knew he was no longer even going to pretend. He'd fallen in love; he was sure she was the one big love of his life. He wanted me to divorce him so he could marry her.

It had never occurred to me to do anything but what he wanted, so I gave him his divorce and they were married.

Now, a year later, I couldn't take it. I just couldn't take it. I had become unbearably depressed and neurotic. And I was afraid I might become something else—an alcoholic. For the second night in succession I'd stopped at the bar on the way home from work and just sat there alone, drinking and thinking of Hank. Mom had written yesterday that she had heard he and Stella had just had a baby. A little girl.

I'd always wanted a baby, but a woman doesn't dare to have one when her husband goes from one job to another. Now Stella had a baby. And Stella had Hank. And I sat alone at the Jade Bar and downed one drink after another.

The place was almost deserted, except for the man at the end of the bar who kept buying me drinks. Suddenly I looked at the disgusted face of the bartender and at the

man who was sitting there, waiting, and all at once I knew what I was letting myself in for. I knew too that I was getting tight. I went back to the powder room and sneaked out through the back door.

The fresh air didn't make me feel better. The next thing I knew, I was leaning against a building, clinging to the wall, and the world was spinning around like a top.

"You've had a few too many, haven't you, sister?" a man's voice said. "How do you feel?"

I got a wavering vision of a tall policeman. "Not so good," I answered. I pulled my coat tight and shivered.

"Cold, isn't it?" he said. "I could do with a cup of coffee. How about you?"

"No. No, thanks."

"Aw, come on. It'll do you good. Then I'll walk you home. All in the line of duty, of course," he added with a grin.

He had a certain commanding way with him and it was obvious he didn't intend to leave me there on the street, so I walked along with him. The world looked steadier by that time anyway.

The policeman looked down at me. "Tell me, how does a pretty girl like you get off the beam like this?"

"You wouldn't understand," I said.

He shrugged and we walked on in silence.

We went into the first restaurant we came to and sat down. I looked at him and thought he was probably in his early thirties. The steady type. I was ready to bet he had a wife and two or three children. And now he was going to tell me how to live!

He ordered a steak sandwich and apple pie with coffee for himself and coffee for me and sure enough, the moment he was finished ordering, he turned a serious face to me. "What's bothering you?"

"I—I'd rather not talk about it."

"Okay, Bonnie. Okay. Just trying to be helpful."

"How did you know my name?"

He shugged. "Oh, a cop makes it his business to know things about the people on his beat. Your name is Bonnie Redmond. You're a stenographer for a chemical company. In case you're interested, my name's Joe Bush."

I nodded, picked up my coffee.

"It's a man, isn't it?" he went on casually. "Boy friend or husband?"

"Husband." Then my lips twisted. "I'm sorry. Ex-husband. He's married to another girl now. You know, the war." Then I felt a little embarrassed. "I'm sorry. I guess I'm being a cat."

"Not at all. You gotta get it off your chest." He went back to the apple pie. "Your folks live here, Bonnie?"

"No. In a little town. Grandview. You've never heard of it."

"Little towns can be nice sometimes. Friendly. Why don't you leave the big city behind and go back home?"

I shuddered at the thought. "I couldn't!" I exclaimed. "Hank and Stella went back there when she was going to have a baby. He wasn't sure of his job here."

"Well, in that case," he said philosophically, "you'll just have to keep busy in your spare time. Got a hobby? Like music? Can you sing? Ever try painting pictures?"

"No," I said irritably, "and I don't collect stamps either."

He looked a little chagrined. "Guess I do sound pretty corny. Just the same, that's what you gotta do—find something you like and work at it like the devil."

"Sorry," I said. "Guess I was shortchanged when it comes to talents."

His brown eyes searched my face. "No," he said. "I don't believe it. Everybody can do something. So can you. You just haven't tried very hard to find out what it is."

He walked me home then and we spoke of things that were happening in the neighborhood. "Take care of yourself," he said when we came to my apartment. Then he stood for a moment without a word. "You're not going to like this," he said, "but I'm going to say it anyway. If you girls would spend half the time doing something constructive that you spend feeling sorry for yourselves you'd soon lick your problems."

I said sarcastically, "And everything we want from life will come to us. Is that it?"

"Something like that."

"Thanks," I said curtly. "Thanks awfully."

Tnere were dark fires smoldering in his eyes now. "Don't mention it," he retorted. "I hand out advice every day. It sort of clears my conscience. Then when I pass a bar and have to pick up a dame who's had too much it doesn't bother me at all. I don't even feel sorry for her!" He slammed his cap back on his head. "Think it over."

■ I THOUGHT it over and I decided I'd better give Officer Bush's homemade remedy a try, just in case it worked. The next week I enrolled in the nearest Y.W.C.A.

I knew after the first few weeks that I'd never be a bowler. No matter how I tried to follow my instructor's example, the balls would veer to the right or to the left and go wildly into the gutter. As for swimming, it left me gasping. My teacher would take one look at me, shaking and blue, and order me to get out and take a shower.

The dancing was worst of all. I had never been a good dancer, but Hank loved to dance. Now I'd find myself thinking, *I should have taken these lessons long ago. Maybe Hank wouldn't have been so impatient with me if I'd been a really smooth dancer.* Which only served to bring back all my depression.

Several nights I'd gone home, tired and discouraged, and met Joe Bush swinging along the street in my direction. "Hello, Bonnie," he'd say. "How are things with you?"

"Oh, fine," I'd answer. I wasn't going to tell him that the gremlins of loneliness and despair were with me morning, noon and night. No matter what I did, I could never escape them.

One Thursday night, when I was due at the Y, those little gremlins really got me.

The next day was a holiday. Most of the girls at the office were busy with plans. They were going away for the week end. There'd be plenty of dancing and plenty of men. Or, if they were married, they were planning a holiday with their husbands. The only diversion I had to look forward to was an afternoon at a movie alone.

I didn't go right over to the Y from the office, the way I had been doing; something prompted me to go to the apartment first and have my supper there. It was a mistake.

The moment I opened the door a wave of loneliness struck me full force. No papers scattered over the floor, no radio blasting forth with the baseball scores, no ash trays piled high with cigarette butts, the way things always were when Hank and I lived together.

I walked into the room, faced the sofa. On those evenings when he hadn't gone out, he'd liked to lie there and sleep when he became bored with the radio. And I had liked to have him there, liked his silent company.

I went through the living room into the bedroom and leaned heavily against the door. It was empty and cold, yet everything in it spoke to me of Hank. The way he'd left his clothes tossed about. The way he'd looked asleep, his brown hair falling into his eyes. The way his hand had reached for me at times. The way he'd touched me.

Yes, there had been times when I really believed he loved me. His need for me had served to convince my willing heart of that. How gentle he could be, how sweet and affectionate when he felt that the occasion called for his affection. It was only when he thrust my restraining arms away almost roughly that I knew it wasn't really love. Even then, it now seemed to me, it had been better to have him there.

I fell to my knees beside the bed and buried my face in the covers and two months of pent-up emotion came forth in a burst of tears. "Oh Hank," I cried, "why couldn't you have loved me a little?"

After a time the torrent of tears ended and I rested against the bed, ravaged by my grief. Darkness came into the room and with it came the voices of people, men and women, hurrying off for an evening together. I sat up and brushed the hair back out of my eyes and stared at my swollen face in the mirror. I couldn't stay here alone tonight but I couldn't go to the Y, either. I'd go out and walk, walk some of this feeling out of me.

■ AS I STEPPED into the street, Joe Bush strolled up to me. "Well, how you doing?" he asked. "Come on, I'll walk down the street with you."

We walked along through the darkness, and my heart was an aching, crying thing because of the bittersweet spell of this night. Joe seemed to feel it. He spoke hardly at all, but I felt his unasked question in his eyes.

"Oh, all right," I exclaimed. "I tried. I tried very hard. I enrolled in the Y.W.C.A. I've gone there twice a week for two months now. But tomorrow is a holiday. The girls at the office were planning a good time for themselves. Everybody but me."

"Oh, sure, I know. So you started feeling sorry for yourself." His mood changed as he started teasing me. He began to tell me a lot of ridiculous things I could do with my holiday. Like going down to the lake to watch the kids sail their boats. Or going for a two-hundred-block walk along the drive which, he assured me, would certainly knock the self-pity out of me. And he added that, lacking anything better, I could always go to the park and sit in the sun.

"I'd love that," I said sarcastically. "Me and the kids and the old folks!"

He laughed. "You know, I'm afraid that's the very thing I'm going to have to do. My one day off, too! But that kid of mine insists I take her to the park."

I didn't ask him any questions but I was curious; I went to the park the next afternoon just to see her. It hadn't been ten minutes when a tall man and a little girl came up to my bench. "So you did come," Joe said. "Miss Redmond, this is my daughter, Angela."

Angela smiled, showing two dimples in a chubby face. "Hello," she said.

Joe sank down on the bench beside me. "Okay, Angie. Now I've brought you to the park. How about playing with the other kids and giving your old man a rest? She hasn't given me a minute's peace since she got up this morning," he said to me.

"Well, I like to come to the park," she said. "I haven't been in a long, long time. So I made my daddy bring me, cause Mommy's awful sick."

I looked at Joe. "I'm sorry to hear that," I said.

"She'll be (*Continued on page 105*)

I hated my friends for betraying me; I hated myself for being betrayed

MISS DOOR MAT

"I used to be a chump," says Carol, "but not now"

■ THE PARTY was going full force when Arnie Macy and I arrived. For a moment the noise confused me and the smoke blinded me. I said an automatic hello to the people nearest, acknowledged an introduction to someone I could only barely see and accepted a drink that was thrust into my hand.

I tried to stay with Arnie but he was swept into the inevitable argument about modern art that always seemed to be going on between his friends. I slipped over to a chair by the window where I would be out of the way. It was like this whenever Arnie took me to a party where most of the guests were artists. I didn't mind. I knew how wrapped up he was in his work, how he forgot everything else when he had a chance to talk about it.

A quiet voice spoke almost in my ear. "Why do you put up with it?"

It was Vincent Morris, the man I had met when I first came in. He was somebody's cousin up from Texas for a visit.

He was looking down at me, waiting for my answer. I knew he'd meant Arnie.

"Because I love him," I said. My words startled me; they weren't the sort of thing you said to a stranger.

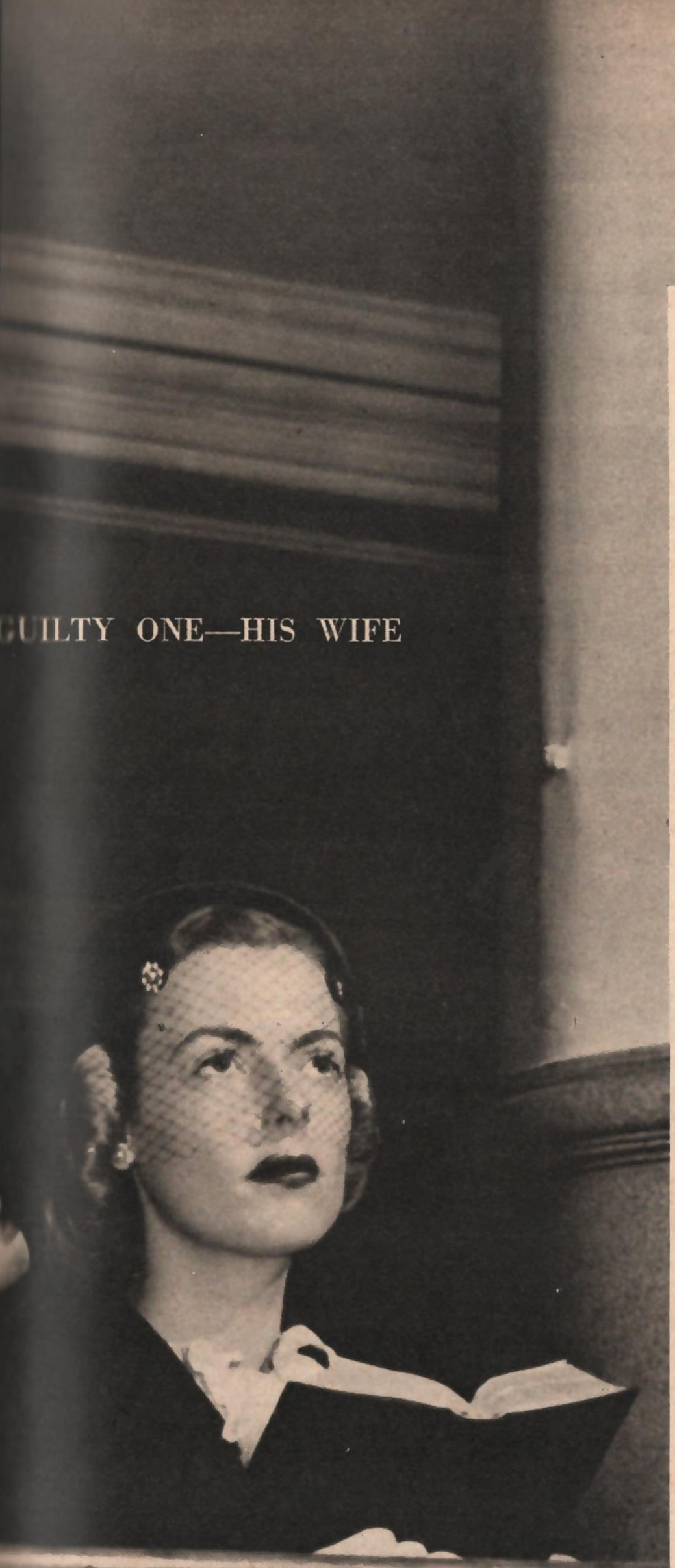
Vincent seemed to consider it the most natural thing in the world for us to be discussing my private life. He sat down on the arm of my chair and stretched out his long legs, shaking his head. "No," he said, "not love. You're just terribly loyal. Is it enough?"

His words pleased me. "I'm glad that I seem loyal, although you're wrong about the love part." The words came out all in a rush because they were very close to my heart. "Loyalty to my friends—that's something I believe (*Continued on page 56*)

PATERNITY RAP

THE STORY BEHIND THAT TERRIBLE CHARGE IS REVEALED BY THI

The rest of the
town knew it
before I did . . .



■ TO TELL my whole story I'll have to take you back to the saucy little girl I was at eight, sitting on the curb of Maple Street on a warm day in June, watching the prim-looking new minister move into the gray frame parsonage shadowed by its big stone church.

The minister himself had carried a stool and a lamp onto the shallow porch and stopped in the shade on his way back to the livery wagon. He patted the top of my hair, which I wore in a Dutch bob because Mama didn't have time to fuss with long hair. "Hello, there," he said. "You look just like the little girl on a box of candy."

I smiled at him; Mama had always taught me to be respectful to ministers. They wore Sunday clothes with white collars all the time and when they came to call they prayed in the parlor, looking down on the roses in the Axminster rug.

"I wouldn't be good to eat, like candy," I told him frankly. "I'm mean, so I'd taste bitter."

"A girl with eyes so brown and a button for a nose couldn't be mean," he said, laughing at me.

"I tease people," I confessed. "I like to."

I expected a scolding from the preacher. I really liked to make a grownup scold me. It made me feel so important that little prickles of pleasure would run through me, almost the same kind of pleasure that came at the first lick of an ice cream cone or the first sweet slup of chocolate soda through a straw. My father worked all the time in his grocery store, and mostly when he spoke to me I could tell he was worrying about something else, and Mama helped in the store as much as she could in between cleaning and cooking. She was always in a terrible hurry. She never had time to listen to me or kiss or hug me. She and Papa checked me in and out, but carefully, as they would a grocery order.

The minister walked away and around the corner of the parsonage came his son, John, who was ten. I stared at him, thinking how awful good he'd always have to

be, having a preacher for a father. He could never lie or cheat. He couldn't even tease people.

I was so curious about such perfection that I wanted to touch him, walk beside him. "I'd like to treat you to some chocolate candy up at the grocery store," I told him when he came out to the curb.

He didn't seem very happy about it—after all, I was a girl—but his father urged him, "Go along with the little girl, son."

We walked down to the store in silence and pushed open the screen door. Papa was nowhere in sight; I guessed he was out back burning rubbish. Again I became conscious that I was with the preacher's son, that he must be very, very good and would be shocked at anything that was naughty. I walked to the candy counter and helped myself to a paper bag full while John stood in surprised and silent horror.

"Now let's beat it," I said in my best sneak thief whisper.

He followed me out of the store quickly enough but he wouldn't touch the candy offered him. "That's stolen," he said. "It's wrong to steal. It's a sin."

"I like sins," I said, eating the candy. "Have some of these licorice ones."

It was some time later that John found out that the grocer was my father and that I wasn't really a thief. Papa was quite lenient about letting me treat. He was lenient about everything as long as it didn't take up his time.

Two years later, John's father died. He was a preacher and therefore would go to some golden heaven rimmed in pearls. For a preacher it shouldn't be bad at all to die, but for his wife it was harder after that to live. She received a small pension and since she had no close relatives she moved to a few rented rooms in an old house in the middle of the town and helped businessmen with their bookkeeping.

My father gave John a job as delivery boy in the grocery store when he was in the eighth grade.

That was the year I knew for sure that I loved John, loved him so much my tongue tangled up when I tried to talk to him. I had to treat him like dirt so he wouldn't catch on. I would have died before I would have let him know how I felt about him.

"Going to be a preacher like your father was?" Papa asked him one day. I was behind the counter sorting out soap wrappers brought in for premiums. I stopped to listen.

"No, sir," John said firmly. "I think I'd like to be a businessman, just as you are. A businessman can be a good person too, just as good as a preacher. Besides, I wouldn't have enough money now to go to college or divinity school."

I kept twitting him anyway about being a goody-goody. By the time I was in high school this teasing had become a habit. I plagued him about his morals, telling him we had only one life to live and we should have a big time at it.

"I'm having a good time," he always answered, and to my surprise he invited me to go to the senior prom though I was only a sophomore and not quite sixteen. "I'll bet you don't even think it's right to go dancing," I'd been chiding him one day. "You're so strait-laced. But I suppose being a preacher's son—"

"Come with me to the senior prom and I'll prove how I can dance," he said, laughing instead of getting mad.

So, before I could believe it, I was standing in front of my hurried and harassed mother while she fixed the hem of a new dress she had bought me for the occasion. "You're such a mean snip to John Renton," she said through the pins in her mouth. "I don't know why he'd want to take anyone to a dance who tormented him like you do."

■ THAT DATE was the first occasion John had to kiss me. I don't remember what we were saying but I stepped back and looked up into his face. Then his lips touched me and something magnetic pulled me fully into his arms.

When he let me go, all the nasty sarcastic remarks were knocked out of me. "You shouldn't have kissed me like that," I scolded him. "Just because you work for my dad doesn't say you can do that. After all, we're not engaged."

"Let's be," he said lightly, and a lump filled up my throat so I couldn't breathe or swallow. "Here's my class ring."

I laughed when I took it but I felt like crying. If I could only have shown him then the depth of feeling that thrilled down through my whole body! But it was easier to say something flip.

After he graduated from high school my father gave him a full-time job as manager of the store and began taking it a little easier.

The days whirled by like a Ferris wheel ride at a Fourth of July carnival. There was a secluded counter in the back of the store where I'd dump my schoolbooks and try to do my homework while I watched

John out of the corner of my eye. When there were too many customers, I'd help out.

Business was booming in those days. The war was on in Europe and it was coming closer to home. Sugar climbed to sixteen cents a pound. Papa stocked up on flour to beat the rising prices and then one day discovered that mice had invaded more than half the hundred-pound sacks.

My heart went completely dead with despair when John's draft number was called and then my hosannas of thanksgiving were almost too loud to conceal when he came marching back a year later without a wound or entanglement with any other woman.

But I died a death far worse when he started seeing Nan Welsh. I was through high school then and was enrolled in the teachers' college which was an hour's ride from home. I boarded at the school during the week and came home Friday afternoons. The agony and despair piled up as the gossip grew that John was seeing Nan in spite of the reputation she had.

If I only hadn't been so snippy to John. If I hadn't twitted and teased him like a brat sister. But after that first passionate kiss when he was a high school senior I had acted even worse than before. His class ring was hidden, a sacred treasure, in my upper bureau drawer.

Frantically, to get his attention back, I had my long hair bobbed and came home with it hugging my head like a blonde cap. But I was no match for Nan. Black hair, big brown eyes—but John knew her reputation, surely!

Everyone said Nan's mother, who waited tables at the Alden Hotel and met most of the traveling salesmen who came to town, had hooked poor old Tim Welsh for a husband just in time. Seven months later the dark-haired, gypsy-beautiful Nan was born. All the other children who followed her each year after had scrawny hair and skimpy eyes like Tim's. Thus Nan's crime became her vividly lovely complexion, so different from the brood of little brown wrens who all crowded together in a saggy house on the shabby hinterland of the town.

When I saw her and John together, I was beside myself with worry. I gulped down the tears back of my throat one Saturday morning in the store to say to him, "I hear you've got a girl."

He looked straight at me while he denied it. "No, not a girl, just a friend. I'm befriending someone who needs some comfort very much. Nan never earned that badge of disrespect she has to wear."

I remembered with a pang how the high school gang had giggled out loud when Nan read in English class the line from "The Merchant of Venice": "It is a wise father that knows his own child," and when she had wanted to play a part in the senior play Miss Adler didn't dare choose a girl with her background when so many of the girls from good families wanted a chance to be heard, seen and applauded.

I didn't say any more to him about her, but any week end I expected someone would tell me that they were engaged or even married. I got nothing from any of my courses; I thought I surely must be going insane. I had daydreams and nightmares in which John was married and gone from me forever. I could see Nan in his arms and when I hurried back home for another week end I didn't dare ask anyone about it.

Finally it was summer vacation. John came over the first night I was home and Mama invited him to dinner.

Afterward John and I went out on the porch together. I had to get him alone; I felt as though it was my last chance on earth. I spoke in quick desperation, having no shame at all over what I was saying. "John, you can't ever be engaged to anyone. Don't you remember at your senior dance you became engaged to me? I still have your ring. And you said a gentleman always kept his word; I heard you telling Papa that once in the store a long time ago. I've always thought of us as engaged. I never dreamed you could marry anyone else."

There was a silence between us. A kind of silvery shadow fanned over his strong face. I felt small standing beside him, and helpless in my misery.

When he answered me his voice sounded as though someone had punched him hard enough to take his breath away. "Say that again, Amy Powell. I didn't realize you felt that way. You never acted—"

But there was nothing more to say. I fell headlong into his arms, not caring how bold I'd been in frantically proposing to a man. I didn't realize anything but the nearness of his face, the hard pressure of the kiss I had dreamed about for three long years.

After an aeon of heaven, I heard a rough, "Gruump," and when reality came back there was Papa standing in the doorway, grinning like a cat by a full fish bowl.

"We were just talking about engagements, Papa," I said out of my hot embarrassment.

"No!" Papa said. He turned and fairly shouted into the dark house, "Come hear the news! It's John and Amy! They're engaged! They're going to get married! It's just what we've dreamed about!"

John hadn't (*Continued on page 64*)

JANE POWELL
CO-STARRING IN
METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER'S
Technicolor Musical
"ROYAL WEDDING"

"Be Lux Lovely," says Jane Powell

Here's the beauty care that guards her million-dollar skin

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9 out of 10 Screen Stars use Lux Toilet Soap

ONE LITTLE PRAYER (*Continued from page 25*) Yust a minute." She went into her kitchen and came back with a tiny cake in her hands. It was swirled with pink frosting and on the top was a little white dove. She put it on the counter in front of me and reached for a little box to put it in. "It's for her," she said, her eyes soft. "The little bird ve haf left over from a vedding cake. You think maybe it make her happy?"

"It's so kind of you," I said.

"Ach, that Cindy. I haf love in my heart for that one. I can remember how she used to come in here before you went away, with the eyes so bright and dancing. She makes the bell to go *ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling,* and how she laugh, holding to her daddy's hand. And how he laugh too. He never say, 'No, no,' like some fathers. He think everything she do so funny."

My face felt tired tonight; it was an effort to smile. Yes, Mark had always thought everything Cindy did was so funny. He had never said no to her in her life. I had lost him to her the day she was born. He had loved her too much, and she had loved him too much. I had tried to tell him but he wouldn't listen to me. And now look.

I said, my voice sounding almost harsh, "She's worse, Mrs. Mueller, since we came back. I took her to the doctor. He said I would have to take her to a psychiatrist—a doctor who understands the mind. It's very expensive. There's free help for those who need it, and we're on the waiting list. But she can't wait."

Mrs. Mueller shook her head. "It seems impossible, a little child to haf trouble with the mind."

"It happens sometimes. Her mind is affected by her father's leaving. All day she doesn't want to do anything but stand and look out of the window. She used to watch that way for him to come home from the base at night. She still thinks he will come, even though she saw him take off and I've tried to explain. Nothing I say seems to get through to her. And then at night she wakes up screaming."

"Is that no better?"

I shook my head, not able to speak. The tears that came so easily these days spilled over and I searched in my bag for a handkerchief.

Hesitantly she said, "The country, avay from New York—"

I wiped my eyes. "The doctor suggested that but I have to stay here and try to find a job to make ends meet."

She touched my hand. "In Vermont lives my husband's mother. You met her; she visited us. Next veek my sister stay by the shop and ve go up there for a vacation. Maybe ve take Cindy, yah? My husband's mother, she don't charge you much, I'm sure. She's a nice old lady. Of course she don't speak so good English—"

I shook my head. "Thanks, but I just couldn't let her go." I pointed to some rolls with little seeds. "Cindy used to like those."

I got some other things and she put them into a bag. On top she put the cake in its little box. When she handed it to me she said, "Tonight I make some special prayers for your little girl."

Prayers! I hoped nothing showed on my face as I took the bag and turned away and went up the steps to the hot street. Prayers were something I took a pretty dim view of. That, and all of religion. I'd been exposed to it, all right. When I was fourteen my mother's sister who lived in New Jersey had taken me away from my father's relatives to live with her. We went to church twice every Sunday and to prayer meeting every Wednesday night, and Uncle Ferd would make longer prayers than anybody else. But one time when I was playing with the baby kittens up in the haymow, he came out there. I got a look at his face and knew he wasn't any different from some of the men I'd been running from half my life. I screamed and screamed and when he covered my mouth I bit his hand. Aunt Milly came running just in time. Only she blamed me.

So I went back to the lower East Side and finished growing up. Sometimes I had quite a laugh for myself thinking about Uncle Ferd, who probably still was standing up in that little country church making those long prayers. I was beginning to know quite a bit about men and life and what I wanted out of life you didn't get by praying. I had a job at Neopay Novelties and met some of the bosses of some of the biggest rackets, and I had seen their girls. Gilt hair and dark make-up on their blank, beautiful faces, their lashes heavy with mascara screening their blank, beautiful eyes. I copied them, dreaming about the day when my shoulders would be heavy with furs and my hands heavy with diamonds. But Mark came along. I loved him and married him and was happy. Until Cindy was born.

Mark had talked about praying too on the day Cindy was born. It would have been all right if he had wanted to say a prayer for me that day; it had been a long, agonizing birth and I almost didn't make it. But the first thing he said to me when he saw me after it was all over was, "I prayed it would be a girl."

"You and your prayers." My voice wasn't much more than a whisper but I got some scorn into it. "You give God the credit when they're answered, and when they're not—"

He gave me a funny smile. "Prayers are always answered, Francie. Only sometimes the answer is no."

"Ha, ha." It wasn't a laugh; I just said the syllables. "It's been no to me all my life. Even now. I wanted a boy."

I would have gone all soft then and finished telling him the wish that had been in my heart all these months: *A boy like you, with your blue eyes and your stubby chin,* but his face got that set look.

"I'm sorry," he said stiffly.

So it had started, me on one side and Mark and Cindy on the other. When I wanted to get a job to add to Mark's pay as a master sergeant he acted as if he thought that was proof I didn't love Cindy enough. I did love her; dark-haired, blue-eyed, she was a lot like me. I kept her immaculate and made her some of the prettiest little dresses you ever saw. And she loved me too, but it was her daddy who had her heart. It was her daddy she cuddled close to in bed mornings while I got up to get breakfast. It was her daddy who told her bedtime stories; I wasn't much good at stories, never having heard any when I was small. On Mark's free time the two of them would go off for the day. I was hurt by their close companionship, but I was mad, too, mad at both of them.

Mark was in the Regular Army. In the spring of nineteen-fifty he was sent out west. Cindy and I went too, at his insistence, and we lived in a trailer camp. There wasn't anything to do and I hated it.

It was the latter part of June that we began hearing about Korea and the 38th parallel and knew that pretty soon Mark would have to go. I don't know how much Cindy took in; too much, I guess. A plane had crashed near the field, carrying a guy we all knew, and I know she heard about that.

Then one morning the middle of July Mark called to say he was going. He'd be allowed to come home to lunch to say goodbye. I ran to the crossroads store for a steak and ice cream, and Cindy went with me and picked some blue flowers that grow wild.

She put the flowers in a saucer (her bouquets always had to go in saucers because the stems were so short) and set it in front of Mark's plate. She climbed up and got the package of different colored napkins and selected a pink one, her favorite color, and folded it crookedly with love and care and put it beside it. "My daddy, my daddy," she sang. I had told her it would be a farewell party, but farewell is a word that doesn't mean much when you are four years old.

I heard the sound of running feet and somebody calling my name. I looked out and saw a girl I knew who lived a couple of trailers down, running with her baby in her arms. "They're going now! They're not even coming home to lunch!"

I had my apron on and my hair was up in pins but I ran too, pulling Cindy along by the hand. When she couldn't run fast enough I picked her up and ran with her in my arms.

I remember the roar of the motors as we neared the field, a small army of us, wives with children, wives who hadn't had their babies yet. "Will we get to see them?" We asked each other that, we asked the brass even, but nobody knew. Some of the girls were crying the way children cry, not bothering to cover their faces. And then, as we milled around the entrance gates, I saw Mark running toward us.

I'll never forget the look on his face. He pulled Cindy out of my arms into his and just stood there holding her, not saying anything. She patted his cheek with her hand the way she always did.

I pressed my knuckles hard against my mouth. I wasn't going to let myself cry. Crying was one of the things you weren't supposed to do. But I wanted to cry. For Cindy. For Mark. For me, because it wasn't me he wanted to hold close or even talk to in these last few precious seconds.

He put her back into my arms. "Take good care of my little girl." His voice broke, and then—oh, it was so awful!—he cried.

Cindy didn't cry. I stood there with her in my arms as the big C-54's left the field. I waved at each one, not knowing for sure which one Mark would be on. I lifted Cindy's arm up and down, waving it for her. Her face was white and her blue eyes enormous, as if from shock.

I put her down and let her walk home along the sandy road. Only it wasn't home any longer, with Mark gone. I felt dazed and confused by the suddenness of what had happened but I tried to talk about what a nice dinner we would have. We went up the steps into our trailer and there was the table with its saucer of blue flowers and the pink crookedly-folded napkin.

Cindy took Mark's plate and put it back on the shelf. She didn't mention him at all but she wouldn't eat and that night for the first time she woke up screaming.

We came back east shortly after. We had sublet our apartment and had a chance to get it back. We could have got by on my allotment in some little town but I couldn't see burying myself in one. I'd get a job and make a little money. But now I knew a little money wasn't going to be enough. I had to have

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a lot of money. Seventy-five dollars a week wouldn't be a bit too much. . . .

I arrived at our house. As I'd expected, a small pale face was watching from a third-floor window. I waved, but as on all the other nights there was no answering wave.

In my mailbox was a letter from Mark. Eagerly I scanned it, hoping for some word for me. But it was like all the others, all for Cindy. "Do you remember those baby rabbits we saw? Don't forget your daddy. I think of you all the time." At the end he said, "Francie, please teach her a little prayer to say for me."

I crumpled the letter back into its envelope. Oh, sure, sure. A prayer, yet! I knew it was wrong to resent that, but I was so sunk under the burden that I hadn't shared with Mark that I could have cried with anger and despair. What sort of God was He to let there be a war and a father snatched away and a little girl's mind hurt with the shock of it? What sort of a God was He if He couldn't look down and do some fixing on His own without having us get down on our knees? That song they used to sing at Aunt Milly's and Uncle Ferd's church in the country about His eye is on the sparrow. How about having His eye on a little girl for a change, and never mind about the sparrows? Of all the dumb things to watch out for!

I fumbled around in my bag for my key and when I couldn't find it I pushed Mrs. Connor's bell. When I was out she took care of Cindy.

She was frying meat for her supper when I went into her kitchen. I could see through to the living room, where my little girl still kept her lonely vigil.

As Mrs. Connor pulled out a chair for me at the kitchen table I said in a low voice, "How was she today?"

She shook her head. "Worse, if anything. She won't play with the kids. She don't even hear me when I try to talk to her. She don't eat nothing, she don't say nothing. I take her to the store but she's so scared she just shakes all over and I have to carry her. I can't do that, Mrs. Johnson. And I can't stay in all the time."

"I know. But I have a chance for a job. I'll pay—"

"I'm glad about the job but I just can't take care of her any more, not for any money. It gets on my nerves. You'll just have to make some other arrangement."

I stood up, took out the dollar I always gave her and put it on the table. Then I went into the living room. "Hello, Cindy."

"Hello, Mommy." She didn't turn around.

I picked her up and it scared me, she was so light. I could feel the small bones through the flesh. I carried her through the hall to our apartment and sat down with her on the studio couch. "We have another letter from Daddy." I tried to make my voice animated. "It's to you, mostly." I got it out and read parts of it to her. I said, "Do you remember the baby rabbits?"

Her head moved, nodding, but her eyes didn't lose their frightening stare.

"What color were the rabbits' eyes, Cindy?"

"Pink." She whispered the word.

I remembered the little cake and I got it and showed it to her. I said, "If you're a good girl and eat your egg tonight I'll let you eat this little cake that Mrs. Mueller made for you," but when I had her egg ready she just looked at it. I gave her the cake anyhow but she just looked at that, too.

I sat across the table watching her. She was so run-down that if she got sick now she might die. I thought about the money I had in my purse. It wasn't very much and there wasn't much more than enough in the bank to pay the rent due next week. I didn't begin to have enough to pay for expensive psychiatric treatments, or for a full-time maid to look after Cindy.

I got a little milk into her and put her to bed. When she was asleep I asked Mrs. Connor to listen for her and went around to see Mrs. Mueller. She said everything would be all right. They would take Cindy to Vermont on Monday and she would be well taken care of until I got some money together.

■ MONDAY MORNING early my little girl with her little suitcase of clothes, that I'd stayed up late to get ready, was gone. She whispered, "Goodbye," with that far-away look in her eyes, but she didn't cry. I guess maybe I wouldn't have let her go if she had cried.

I didn't cry either. I think I even felt a sort of relief as I climbed back up the stairs. But when I went into my apartment there was something frightening about the emptiness. Cindy was gone and all of Mark that I had been able to keep had gone with her. He would hate me if he knew what I had done, what I was going to do.

I cut myself some bangs like I used to wear. I put on some cake make-up and a lot of lipstick and a lot of mascara. I pushed aside the suits and plain blouses that I had bought trying to please Mark and pulled out a black dress that he had never liked because he said it was too tight. I hunted for a long time until I found the slave bracelet I used to wear around my ankle. And then I looked in the mirror and took a deep breath. Mrs. Mark Johnson was gone too. Frances Kelly was back.

At Neopay Novelties Ben looked me over. He smiled when he saw the ankle bracelet. "Hello, Francie. You're really back."

I made myself smile at him the way I used to do and it wasn't too hard. . . .

I was Francie Kelly for almost a month. I watched Ben peel three twenties and three fives off a big roll the first week and the second and the third and heard him say there was lots more where that came from. I had passes made at me by some of the customers and I shrugged and told myself, *So what? It didn't hurt me any, did it?* I looked at the pictures Ben showed me in the slot machines. They were of girls without much on, doing a strip tease, and I said it again: *So what?*

But one day when Ben was out I looked at some of the pictures I'd heard him say were for the private clubs and they made me sick. Real sick.

Maybe in the old days Francie Kelly could have looked at pictures like that and said, *So what?* I don't really know. All I know is that I walked out.

It was payday, and in a little while Ben would come back and peel all that money off his big roll of bills. Maybe I'd come back and get it after I'd thought it over for a while, but right then I just couldn't have looked at Ben, couldn't have touched that money.

I went to Mrs. Mueller's. She had a letter every day about Cindy, written in German because her mother-in-law couldn't write in English. Today when I stopped in there her face was bright. "Such good news," she said, and laughed a little. "Today she pulled the curl of the little girl next door!"

I said that was wonderful, and it was. I went back up the steps to the stree Only there was something about it tha wasn't wonderful. It took me a whil with this sick and dizzy feeling in m head, before I could get the thought int words: *A stranger had been able to d more for my little girl than I had don*

■ AT HOME there was a letter waitin for me from Mark. It started out lik all the others, all for Cindy, and the he said, "Francie, something happene today that I want to tell you about. got cut off from the rest of the guy in my outfit. I took cover in a foxhol but every time I raised my head sniper on the hill would have their guns o me. I'd duck and push my face into th dirt and hear their bullets sing over m head and hear their wild yells. It wa fun for them and I knew they weren going to stop until they got me. But as lay there with my mouth and eyes an nose full of Korean dirt, I could hea something else: Cindy's voice. I couldn make out the words, but I knew it wa a prayer. And suddenly out of nowher one of our own tanks came roaring an all those bullets marked Johnson neve found their mark. I know how you fee about such things, Francie, so I'm no asking you to believe it, but thank you fo teaching my little girl a prayer to sa for me."

I folded the letter slowly and put i back into its envelope. I thought, *I wis I had taught her a prayer; I'm glad yo believe that I did.*

That night I slept, and when it wa starting to get light I got up and wen out into the little kitchen and turned o the lights and made myself a pot of coffee I'd go to Vermont, get out of this tow for a day or two. I'd feel better if could see with my own eyes that Cindy played in the sun and pulled a littl girl's hair. Maybe then I could ever force myself to come back and go o working at Neopay. Maybe I'd know for sure I ought to get out of her life fo her own good. . . .

We were late getting into the Vermon village where Mrs. Mueller lived. I think it was a little past seven. Anyway, i was dark and the drugstore where we stopped was closed. I looked around fo a taxi but there wasn't any. A kid o a bicycle said you turned left at th Congregational Church and Mrs. Mueller's house was the first one in the second block.

I started walking in the direction he pointed. This was a real hick town, just like I'd read about in books. The streets weren't paved except in the middle and there wasn't any movie. The only place that was open was the church I wa approaching. People were moving toward it, teen-agers even.

Oh brother! I thought. *Imagine going to church when you have a date!* The girls were pretty and giggled; the boys swaggered. They'd hold hands under a hymnbook, I thought, and going home they'd pick the darkest streets and kiss I knew just how their kisses would be sweet and clean and good. Mark had kissed me that way.

I turned my face away from the sound of the bell and the brightness that streamed from the stained glass windows. I thought of the way I had been at eighteen when Mark first kissed me, and wondered how he had been able to see past the mascara to the girl I really was. Or the girl he had hoped I'd be. I had let him down Cindy too. I knew that now, but I didn't know what I could do about it.

I got to the house where the kid on the bicycle had said Mrs. Mueller lived. Light

were on upstairs and down. I walked up on the porch and knocked. I could look through the screen door and see the doll Cindy had brought with her. I could see a pair of blunt-pointed scissors and a string of paper dolls and some flowers in a saucer on the table. No one came to the door so I opened it and put down my bag and called, "Hello."

From upstairs I could hear Cindy's high sweet voice. I held my breath, listening. It was just like Mark had said in his letter. I could hear her voice but I couldn't make out the words.

"Ve start it again." It was the soft guttural voice of old Mrs. Mueller. "Close your eyes, Liebling."

Again Cindy's voice, "Lieber Gott—"

My fingers pressed hard into my cheeks. That was a prayer she was saying. My little American girl, saying a prayer in German. In a minute I'd go up there. My hands moved up over my eyes. In just a minute, when I could stop crying. . . .

I was still standing there when Mrs. Mueller came downstairs a few minutes later. "Ach—it's Mrs. Johnson! Your little girl, already she is sleeping, but for her Mutter I vake her." She took a couple of steps toward me. "Mrs. Johnson, you are crying?"

"Yes." I turned away and went to the table where the saucer held Cindy's flowers. "That was a prayer I heard her saying."

"Yah. Vun little prayer I teach her in German. You not mind? Ve pray each night for her daddy to be safe. She not haf to vorry no more with Gott taking care. She not haf to vake in the night with the screaming."

I bent my head. "I've never believed much in prayers. I don't understand how a prayer can help."

For a little while there was just the ticking of the big old clock. I turned around and saw on her wrinkled face more goodness, more wisdom than I had ever seen on any face. She spread her gnarled hands in a gesture that was simple and beautiful. Softly she said, "So who can understand? That is faith, maybe. To believe, even if ve not understand."

That night I was given a cot in Cindy's room. For a long time I looked at my child. Her lashes made fringed half circles over cheeks that were rosy and almost as full as in early summer. I pulled the blanket up closely, my fingers lingering on the hair I smoothed back from her face. Her breathing continued even and untroubled.

Thoughts formed in my mind: *I've loved you, Cindy, only not enough. Not until now. I can give you what you need, now that I know what it is. Something to believe in.*

I need that too, Cindy.

I turned out the light and went over to the window. Below me spread the lights of the little town. It was a snug, safe little town. Here Cindy and I would stay until Mark came home.

I raised my eyes. The stars seemed very close tonight, closer than they ever had in New York. New York seemed far away, Ben seemed far away, but Mark seemed as near as my breathing.

"Lieber Gott . . . dear God . . . I believe. . . ."

I put my forehead against the cool pane of glass. The trembling had gone out of me, and a great peace was in me, a peace that made me feel strong. I whispered the words that I would write to Mark when I told him about Cindy's German prayer: "I'm saying a prayer too. For you. For all of us. For your return."

The End

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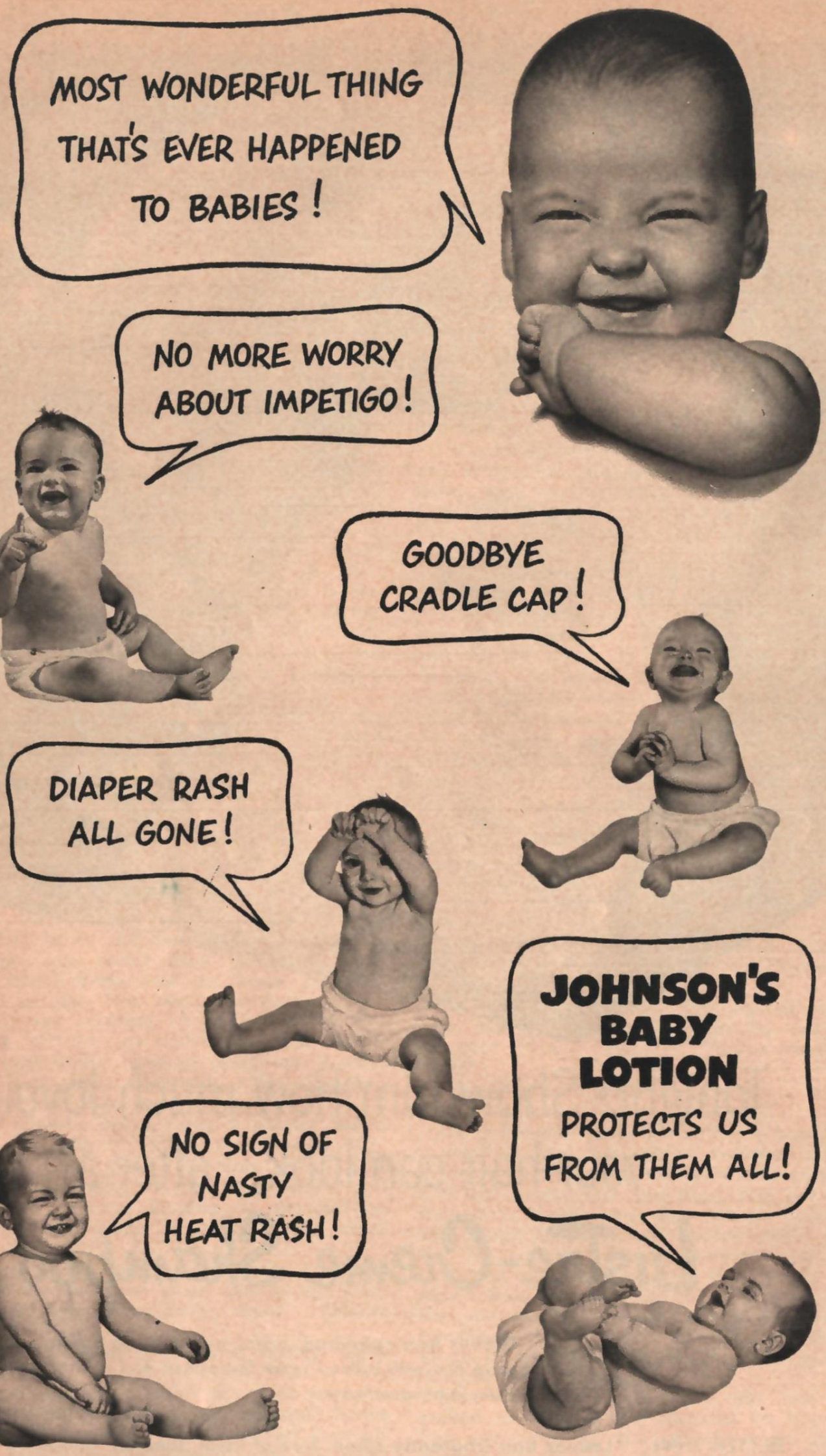
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JOHNSON'S BABY LOTION

Johnson & Johnson

SURPRISE DAUGHTER (*Continued from page 17*) I wondered what a little chick with dew drops behind her ears would think of a pan like mine. Skin and hair the color of red sand, square jaw in a big face, put together tough and hard like the villain in the comic books.

There was a noise, a mouse-big noise, by the door and I turned. A babe not four feet high was standing there watching me. A funny seedling with a rosebud kisser and wide-open blue eyes. Her nose (she got shortchanged on that) was tilted upward. She had red hair like mine, only soft around her face. Somehow I hadn't expected her to be such a cute little peanut. Tiny yet sturdy, and so doggone sweet.

I got up from the chair and settled back again, my heart rattling against my ribs. I swallowed and said, "How are you, Patty?"

"Fine." After that long speech she walked leggily across the room, sat down in a straight-back chair and examined me.

I lit a cigarette and my hands were shaking. I leaned forward. "I've been in South America. Do you know where that is?"

She bobbed her head up and down. "Mrs. Boyer told me," she piped.

She didn't seem to know I was her old man and it wasn't something you could blurt right out. *Take it easy,* I told myself; *fillies that age are skittish.* "And what do you do besides go to nursery school?" I asked.

"Play."

"Just wasting your life away," I said and gave her a grin. "Do you like movies?"

"Mickey Mouse, I do," bobbing her head again.

"Nothing else?"

"I go to sleep." She pitched the movies overboard almost crossly.

"Smart girl," I said. I was off course now. I took a stab at the zoo, the beach, ice cream, dogs and cats. The responses I got hit a new low. She just wasn't having any. Finally I hit on Easter. "It's almost Easter," I said. "Did you know that?"

She nodded. "I'm going to be a bunny in the Sunday School play."

That was the longest speech she'd made yet. I sat up straight. Now we were getting somewhere. I'd build this up for her, make it count. "Say, that's okay," I said. "You'll be a very cute bunny. Do you sing? I mean, can a bunny sing?"

She was twisting her feet on the rungs of the chair like she was embarrassed or uncomfortable or both. She nodded finally but her forehead was puckered in a frown and something sort of hurt-like was in her blue eyes. There was something here I didn't get.

"Say, I know," I snapped my fingers, "how about singing for me? We might even do a duet." I looked at her. "No duet."

She had squirmed her small stern nearly off the chair. I saw her mouth shake and her face turn pink.

"Okay, baby," I said. "I know when I'm licked."

She climbed off the chair and all at once she stamped her foot and pushed her lips out in an angry pout. "I have to go to the bathroom!" she exploded.

Well, for the love of Pete! I jerked straight up, gaping at her foolishly.

"It's the middle button," she said. "I can't undo it." She twisted her head over her shoulder, showing me just how it was she couldn't reach the button.

I squatted on my heels and she backed up to me fast. Then she was walking into the hall, her back stiff, clutching a handful of pink silk with both hands.

I wiped the sweat off my forehead and stared out the window. Me, making like a father and at the same time acting like

I didn't have my full growth. How's that for a dope?

Right then I decided one thing. I was going to stick around for a while; it would take some doing to find just the right place for her. What the heck! I had come several thousand miles; a month or two wouldn't make any difference. I'd get acquainted with her. Maybe she'd even come to like a hard-bitten old dope like me.

■ I HAD FINISHED my second cigarette when I heard her at the door. I turned and squatted down once more and fumbled with the buttons.

"Thank you," she said politely. She picked up my hand, as much as she could hold, and rubbed her cheek against it. "It's a 'mazement," she said.

"An amazement?" I said gently. "What is, baby?"

She sucked in her breath, her eyes, two blue-white stars, glued to mine. This was something big she was about to give and she didn't know how I was going to take it. She let her breath go and said with a rush, "I prayed the Little Lord Jesus every night that you would come home and you did."

I rocked back on my heels. It had smashed against my heart so hard that I shook like I was sick. I didn't want her to see my face right then. I pushed it down against her hair, holding her so close that a little gurgle of surprise escaped her.

So she had known all along who I was and she thought I was okay. She *wanted* me even! I got up and sat down in the chair once more but with her in my arms. She smiled up at me and I smiled back.

Give her up? Whom had I been kidding? She belonged to me, didn't she? In my twenty-six years I couldn't remember really having anyone before.

I held her fiercely close and a lot of old resentments washed out of me, never to come back. I felt like I had the world by the tail. "We'll stick together, baby," I promised her. "We'll make out okay, huh?"

Maybe she didn't understand what I meant, but she knew the right answer. "Yes, Daddy," she said. *The End*

WHY KISSES PASSED ME BY (*Continued from page 13*) hurry home, girls. Thanks, though, for the compliment." I started to walk on.

Sara took little running steps beside me. "Oh, don't be such a snob all the time!"

"Snob?" I faltered.

"We've nicknamed you Lois S. Howe," she said with a frank grin. "The S stands for Snooty."

I slowed my gait, appalled. "But you don't understand," I began lamely. It was inconceivable that they could have thought me snobbish! The lonely aren't snobs!

"I understand this much," she replied. "You're on our baby-sitter list, but unless you unbend a little you'll never get called for a job. Didn't that ever occur to you, when you were revelling in your private company?"

When we parted at the corner I was savoring a new contentment. Bursting into the house I wanted to shout, "Hi, Mom! Guess what! The girls waited for me today!" Having lied so long about my nonexistent gang, was it strange that I longed to brag now about newfound friends?

But I remembered abruptly that Mom had been ill that morning, so I went quietly into the kitchen. Mom wasn't there, and I was doubly disappointed to find Gloria preparing supper. She told me that Mom had fallen asleep. "You mustn't wake her," she added. "She didn't sleep all night."

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La Comtesse de la Falaise

"For a completely natural make-up, I find Pond's Vanishing Cream a *perfect* powder base," says the Comtesse Alain de la Falaise.

I looked around. "What is there to eat?"

"It's right there on the table, punky," she replied amiably, seating herself. "There's all you need to make you healthy, wealthy and slim."

I stared with dismay at the vegetable platter and fruit salad, the latter with only a teasing drop of dressing. "You're putting me on a diet!" I declared indignantly. "I'm old enough to know how to eat!"

"*How,*" she agreed, "but apparently not *what,* so I took it upon myself—"

"You take too much upon yourself!" I blazed. "You can't push me around that way!"

"Evidently," she replied calmly, "you haven't noticed I'm budgeting my appetite too, just for your sake."

"You never did anything for my sake! It's all—" Hearing footsteps on the stairs, I stopped.

Mom appeared in the hallway, her faded bathrobe making her look old. "There's no end to this fighting, is there?" she asked wearily.

I recalled, too late, the desire to tell her the truth that had fanned me home from school. Part of me wanted to run to her and confess all my lies that instant. Another part restrained me, the old part so accustomed to bickering with Gloria. I could not admit my guilt now, not while Gloria listened. She'd laugh at me again.

The phone rang, and I let Gloria answer it. After a moment she sang out, "It's for you, punky! A man!"

I saw Mom's frown of concern as I went to the phone. Covering the instrument with her hand, Gloria teased me, "Does Frank Sinatra know you? It sure sounds like him! What a voice! See if you can wangle me a date."

My hand was unsteady as I took it, not so much from curiosity or excitement as from my uneasy awareness of Mom's reproving gaze on me. "Hello," I said.

A pleasant, mellow male voice answered. "Miss Lois Howe? This is Mr. Cox calling. Your name was given to me by Miss Lang this evening. My wife and I got a last-minute invitation tonight and need a baby-sitter. Are you busy?"

"No, I'm not," I replied, adding eagerly, "I'll be glad to come!"

"Good. I'll pick you up about eight-thirty."

The moment I hung up I became aware again of Mom's pained eyes waiting for an explanation. I blurted, "It isn't what you think at all! Really, Mom, it's nothing!"

"Nothing?" Gloria teased from the table. "That honey of a voice was nothing? Come on, the truth, now! Who is he?"

"I don't know him," I explained quickly to Mom. "Sara gave him my number."

I was too anxious to remedy matters to be conscious of the way I put it. I didn't know until I heard Mom's muted sob that I had only made things worse. She sank into a chair, shaking her head in that terribly pathetic, perplexed way she had that sent shivers of remorse all through me. I didn't care then about Gloria. I only knew that she was not well, and that I was to blame for her misery. "Mom," I began in a low, solemn tone, searching for the words that would least hurt her. "Mom, I have a horrible confession to make."

"Don't!" she protested, bringing her hands up to her face. "Don't make it worse! I know enough, Lois! I don't want to hear any more!"

Gloria went over to her and slid her arm around her. "Be quiet, Lois!" she said. "Can't you see how you've upset her?"

They were locking me out again! My first reaction was to leave the house instantly, slamming the door behind me, and giving the eternal truth to the imaginary sign above the door.

Truth. . . .

My impulse rocked and wavered on the reflection of that word. I probed in my memory for something Doc had told me, something to which I might cling. "You hate because you're hurt," he'd said. "Gloria doesn't hate you. You hate yourself. Your mother loves you. . . ."

I ran to her, and pressed my face against her shoulder.

For a while no one spoke. It had been so long since we'd attained any kind of unity. It was Gloria who broke the grave quiet around us. With a tight laugh she chided, "Of all the weeping families! Shame on us! If Dad were here, he'd put us in our places!" She flicked a tear from my cheek. "You goose! Getting us all upset over a silly phone call!"

Perhaps she was taking advantage of my weakened position, but I was too overwhelmed to care. Nothing could have stopped me now from telling Mom about my life of lies, about my envy of Gloria and my self-disgust, about my unbearably lonely evenings at the drugstore, and about my talk with Doc.

It wasn't told easily, but my audience listened in a respectful, attentive silence, patient when I paused, solemn when I finished. Mom was only able to repeat, "I should have known better. I should have known!"

Gloria's reaction was equally important. I watched my sister's face closely, expecting some sign of derision. She returned my gaze levelly, and I realized that everything Doc had said was true. She was not going to laugh at me. Indeed, in the depths of her dark eyes there was nothing but compassion. It was both terrible and wonderful to realize that all the disgust I had harbored was merely jagged reflections of some inner mirror. Because it had been easier to blame my sister than myself for all my faults and failures, I'd projected my self-hate out to her.

Finally I said, "Maybe if you put me on that diet, Gloria, I won't have to make up a pack of lies to fill an empty life."

Her faint smile broadened. "After this, I think you have the courage to put yourself on that diet. Still, it wasn't all a pack of lies. I distinctly heard a man's voice on that phone a while ago."

"You did," I grinned. "It was Mr. Cox, and he wants a baby-sitter tonight. I need the money because I've got a debt to pay."

A horn blared from the curb and with alarm I glanced at the hall clock. It was already eight-thirty. Grabbing some school books, I rushed to the door, calling back as I went out, "He'll drive me home, Mom! Don't worry!"

Before I closed the door, I heard her promise, "I won't, darling, I won't."

I skipped down two steps and stopped abruptly. Turning slowly, I stared reflectively at the white wood above our front door. There was no sign there stating, "Lois Howe must not spend evenings here," nor would there ever be again. *The End*

NEXT MONTH—

On their wedding night

she told him. Read:

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Desk G-3054, Cincinnati 25, Ohio

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*City*_____ *Zone*____ *State*_____

*Age*_____ *Dress Size*_____

MISS DOOR MAT (*Continued from page 43*) in very much."

"Loyalty is all right," he conceded, "but it can be misplaced, you know. Friendship has to be mutual. You can't do it all, even though you're willing. When you take too much from someone else, it does something to him. It has to be give as well as take."

"Oh, no, you're wrong," I interrupted eagerly. "In a real, true friendship it doesn't matter. The giving can be all on one side. If friends are loyal—"

"You keep flinging that word 'loyal' around, Miss Sanders—or may I call you Carol? I've been watching you ever since you came into this room. Your escort left you practically at the door, you don't seem to know many people here, he didn't bother to see that you met anyone except me, and I saw to that."

"Oh, that's just Arnie," I explained. "He's an artist, you know, and vague about such things."

"Would you have been that casual about him?" Vincent asked.

"No, but you see that's different. It's Arnie's way and I'm Arnie's friend and part of friendship is accepting the way the other person is."

We argued for almost an hour, Vincent holding stubbornly to his view that friendships should mostly be taken lightly. "You take it all too seriously, Carol. If we're lucky we each find a few people who mean enough to warrant the fierce loyalty you are defending. But most friendships should be casual. You love doing things for your friends. What do they do for you?"

"They would do anything for me," I told him sharply. "I simply don't need them right now as they need me. When I do, they'll all be there."

I could see the skepticism in his eyes and it infuriated me, but before I could think of the right words to make him see, Arnie came looking for me. "Come on, Carol," he said. "Esther's invited us over to her place. She's so totally wrong about those pictures we saw and I've got to convince her."

I said goodbye stiffly to Vincent, hating the almost pitying look in his eyes. It made me feel shabby to have been discussing my friends with such a person.

Thank goodness, Arnie understood perfectly how I felt. We had often talked about it. He knew he could depend on me always. "Most girls would misunderstand a lot of things about me, Carol," he had said frankly when he asked me to wait for him until he had money enough to marry. "Some people think I'm lazy. They don't stop to think that an artist is not like other people; an artist must work when he feels the inspiration."

"Oh Arnie!" I protested. "You don't have to explain, not to me!".

He didn't have to feel ashamed of borrowing money from me, either. I knew without his saying how he hated needing the money; I knew he would pay me back as soon as he could. Nor would I let him apologize when he kept me waiting nearly every time we had a date. "You understand about me, don't you, Carol? How forgetful I am—"

Yes, I understood.

■ I WAS FEELING below par but it was two weeks after the party before I would give up and admit that I had the flu. I had nursed Sarah's youngest child for a day and a night while she was sick, so I knew just what to take, but in spite of it I got sicker and sicker and finally I had to call a doctor. He took one look at me, said, "Pneumonia," and called an ambulance.

For over a week I was too sick to care what happened to me. The doctor wanted to phone my relatives but there was no one close to me since Mother had died a year ago.

When I was feeling more myself, I gave the nurse Arnie's name and had her call him and ask him to come to the hospital.

He came at once. "I tried to get in to see you sooner, Carol," he told me. "I was terribly worried about you, darling."

"You came as soon as I called, Arnie," I said, wishing I could fling that in Vincent's face as proof of Arnie's dependability.

Arnie had a bunch of flowers for me, too, and I loved his bringing them, at the same time that I worried about their cost. He stayed an hour and when he left I forced him to take one of the two ten-dollar bills in my purse; he had let slip that he was behind in his rent again.

I lay in the hospital two long dreary weeks after that. Arnie came to see me several times more, though I knew he hated hospitals. He explained that Sarah was coming as soon as she could get someone to stay with her children. "They're too broke to pay a sitter," he explained unnecessarily; I had stayed with Sarah's children frequently so she could go out. "Of course, as soon as Dick's book is published—" he added, and smiled at me.

"And Esther?" I asked. "What's she doing these days?"

"She's got a new job," he told me enthusiastically. "Awful hours but lots of opportunity. She sent her love and said she'd be here to see you just as soon as possible."

Esther and Sarah both came before the two weeks were up. They kissed me and fussed over me, telling me how much they had missed me and insisting that I must call them the moment I got home.

And finally I could go home. I called Sarah the first day.

She was glad to hear from me. She wanted to see me soon. She told me pathetically that she and Dick were invited to a very special party the next Saturday and would have to stay home because they couldn't afford a sitter.

There was a long pause when I didn't offer to stay with the children. "Well, you must come up for dinner soon, darling," she said uncertainly.

"I'd like to."

"I'll call you, then," she said vaguely.

I hung up the phone, knowing she would forget to call. *She's busy,* I told myself, *with Dick and the children. She's not really thoughtless. And you're not important,* my heart added. *You're just a friend. . . .*

■ WHEN I called Esther we made a date to meet for lunch but she had to break it at the last minute; some relatives from out of town, she said. I waited but she didn't suggest another date. She was busy too, evidently.

And Arnie? Well, Arnie came to see me. He hadn't changed any. I was terribly broke, and finally, when he didn't offer to repay the money I had loaned him, I mentioned it timidly.

He looked as if I had slapped him. "I haven't sold a picture in six months, Carol," he said gently, like a loving mother to a naughty child. "You know that."

It was on the tip of my tongue to retort that he hadn't painted a picture in six months either, but I didn't say it. What was the use? It was only too obvious that I had been a fool, a blind fool. Arnie didn't really love me and never would. When you loved a woman you sensed her needs, you took care of her when she was in trouble. Or at least that was what I had always thought. Maybe I was wrong.

I had tested my friends and found them wanting. I hated them for betraying me; I hated myself for being betrayed.

I shut myself away from them because I couldn't stand the hurt. I built high walls inside and told myself that no one could ever get to me again. You could trust no one, no one except yourself.

When I broke off with Arnie he was like a child who has been refused a toy. "You used to be so sweet, so understanding, Carol," he said reproachfully.

"I used to be a chump, you mean," I said, but he only continued to look sorrowful and bewildered.

It didn't matter; nothing mattered. I went to work each day because I had to, and then I came home and closed my door on the world. I spoke to no one except when it was absolutely necessary. I even had the phone taken out.

It was lonely, of course, but a satisfying loneliness, I felt. No one could get at me to hurt me. I was safe.

Then I opened the door one night and found Vincent standing there. "I was worried about you," he said. "I'm here only for a week and I wanted to see you. Sarah said you'd been sick and that no one had heard from you lately. Central said your phone had been disconnected. What's wrong?"

I stared at him stonily. "Nothing, except that you were right. I found that out. I hope it makes you happy."

His face was sympathetic and it was seeing that that undid me. Tears sprang to my eyes, though I tried hard to hold them back—tears of weakness, of bitter frustration, of despair.

Vincent pushed the door wide and walked into my room, took off his coat and sat down on the couch. "Come here, Carol," he said gently. "I want to hear it all, from the beginning."

I told him. The words poured out in torrents. I described my sickness, how my friends had been so casual, so indifferent. "When I got sick and needed them, they did the least that they could," I sobbed. "They didn't care, not really. They had their own affairs to think about. They couldn't be bothered with me. I hate them. I hate them all!"

His arms went around me. It was wonderful to feel his strength. It was wonderful to feel that here was someone who understood. I waited for his words of sympathy, of pity and encouragement.

"You weren't fair, Carol," he said. "You weren't fair to them."

I jumped up, stung to my heart. "Vincent!" He was pointing his finger at *me,* blaming *me!* The one person left in the whole world who should have understood, the only person left, had failed me too.

He took hold of my shoulders and shook me gently. "Carol, you must listen to what I have to say."

I snatched myself away from his touch.

"All right," he said, and there was anger in his voice. "Now you *are* going to listen. There's something you should know for your own sake. You're all mixed up, all twisted and turned inside. You started out to be furiously loyal to everyone you knew. You begged your friends to impose on you, make a door mat of you, and taught them to despise you. The normally unselfish people drew away; it was only the selfish ones who were left, the ones who could take from you without hating themselves. Then, suddenly, you change. You demand a different feeling from them. You demand what they haven't got to give. It's not fair, not to them, not to you. Don't you see? You have to start again. You have to start at the beginning."

"Are you entirely through?" I asked coldly. "Have you said all you have to say? Because it makes no difference at all to me."

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But spending money's a *problem* when you want so *much*—everything from dancing lessons to another place setting of beautiful International Sterling!

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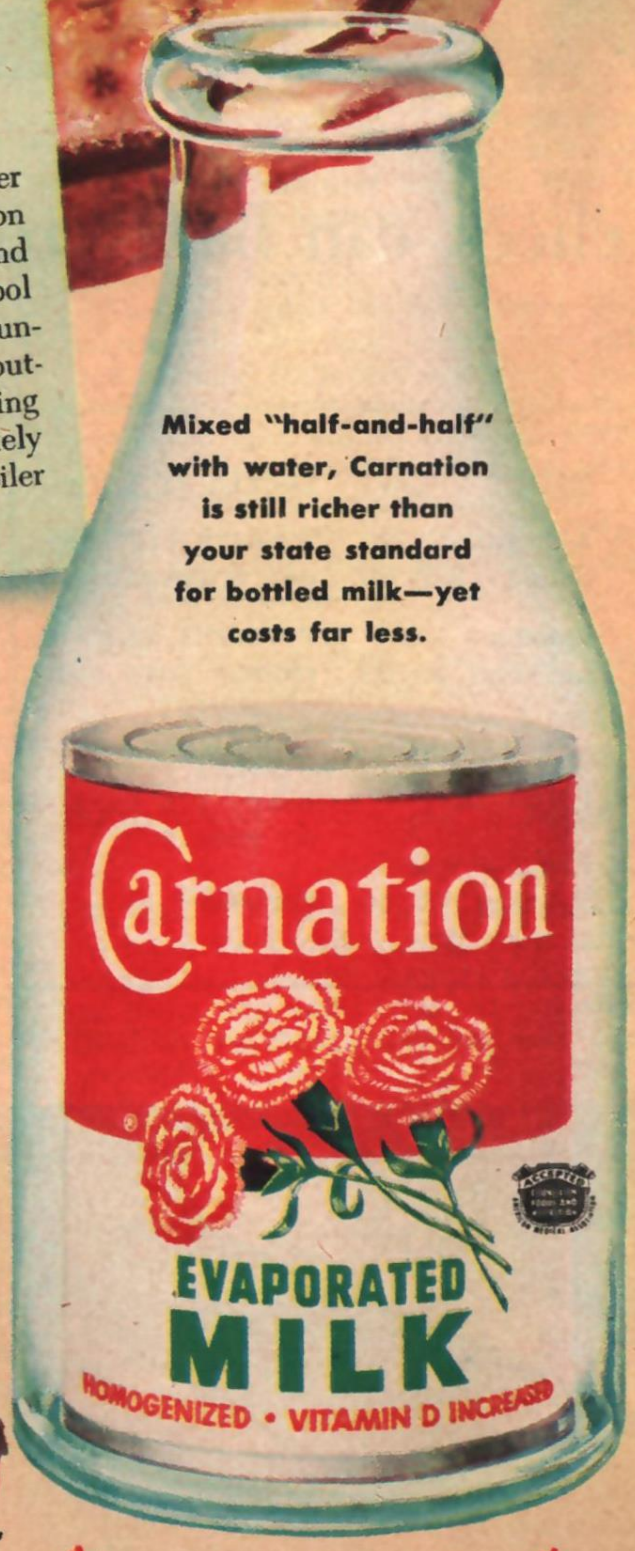

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He looked at me a long moment. "Yes, I'm through, Carol," he said quietly, picking up his coat. "I had hoped you could start again—on me. I'd like to be your friend. Maybe your first *real* friend. But—" He shrugged.

At the door he hesitated, reached in his pocket and took out a card. "Here's my address if you ever want to take me up on that friendship deal."

I had thought all my tears were gone, but I found out now that they were not....

■ WHEN I WOKE the next morning I lay there and wondered what had happened to me. I glanced at the clock and saw that it was still very early. I was hungry for the first time in days and I got up and went to the kitchen to put water on for breakfast coffee.

While the water boiled I looked in my closet and reached way in the back for a bright figured dress that I hadn't worn in a very long time. I ate an egg and a piece of toast and sat dreamily in the window while I drank my coffee, noticing for the first time that the tiny brick courtyard behind my apartment was showing signs of spring. There were only a few plants but they were bravely putting forth tiny green shoots.

Every spring, I thought, *they reach out newly for the sun. Every winter they seem to die, but when the sun touches them, they live again.*

I decided to walk to work. As I went along the street I looked at people's faces. Some were tight and drawn with worry, others carefree and happy. Some smiled at me and I smiled back. It was a little thing to give, a smile, but it was nice.

What was it Vincent had said that first night? "There are all kinds of friendships, Carol, not just one kind. There is the warm, friendly feeling you have when a stranger smiles at you on the street. There is the casual, free and easy friendship you feel for a person you meet once in a while. You are making something dark and mysterious and intense about it. Once in a very great while, maybe only once in your whole life, you'll meet someone you want to be intense about. Don't try to push everyone into that role."

Had I done that? Had I tried to push everyone willy-nilly into a relationship that was more than they wanted? Had I expected much too much in return for my unasked giving?

"*Once in a great while—*" That was what Vincent had said about a real friendship. . . .

■ I WROTE him that night to tell him I was starting to build a whole new foundation for living.

A few days later I received his answer by air mail. "I think I have been praying for your letter, Carol," he wrote. "You looked so little and alone standing there in the doorway of your apartment defying the world. And you looked so beautiful with the tears caught in your long lashes. I wanted to take you in my arms and kiss you, to love and protect you, but you wouldn't let me—couldn't, I guess. This was a fight you had to see through all by yourself.

"I'm coming as soon as I can get away. Save time for a friend, my dear, but not a casual one."

The letter went on but I had to stop for a minute to let go of my breath. *Vincent is coming,* my pounding heart said. *Vincent is coming!*

And I found that I was praying too, praying that I would be worthy of what he was offering me—a real friendship based on love and mutual need. *The End*

THAT FATAL RIDE (*Continued from page 23*) promised Aunt Ellen she'd be home by six."

Bruce shifted his weight in the easy chair. I hadn't fooled him, I saw. He'd always been hypersensitive to real or fancied snubs. But Paul, with his easy friendliness, soon had him smiling and relaxed again. We had dinner in the patio, and several times Bruce's laughter rang out. Before Paul drove him back to town, he said earnestly, "I don't remember when I've enjoyed an evening so much. It's been wonderful being here, just like old times."

"You must come again soon," I told him, smiling.

He came back to see us several times during the next weeks, and each time he was almost pathetically grateful to us for inviting him. His nervous mannerisms worried me a little, though, and the night I was mixing drinks in the kitchen and turned around to find him standing behind me, I couldn't help a startled gasp.

His fair skin turned beet red. "I—I thought there might be something I could do to help."

I almost said to Paul that night, "Don't bring him here again, darling. Bring home a stray dog, or a dozen stray cats, but not Bruce Wade." Still, I shrugged it off again.

I'd let my imagination run away with me for a moment; that was all. I wasn't going to turn Paul against him when he was the only friend Bruce had left from high school days. From anywhere.

■ PAUL USUALLY DROVE to town with me on my bridge club night, and visited with his mother, but the following Wednesday he brought home some legal papers to work on and I drove to Palmetto alone. He went out to the car with me and shut the door after I'd slid behind the wheel. He leaned over and kissed me goodbye. "Have fun, honey."

I drove away, humming to the dance music on the car radio. At the end of our private lane I got out to open the gate which led onto the main road. As always, I stood a moment and looked back at our white stucco house on its little green summit. *Paradise for two,* I thought; *maybe three, next year.* I hopped back in the car and zipped on through the gate and down toward town.

It was late when I dropped Laura off in front of Aunt Ellen's big white house and started home again. Small fingers of fog brushed across the windshield by the time I got into the low foothills. I'd left the gate into our lane open and I almost ran smack into it before I realized someone else had been through and shut it again.

I slammed on the brakes and jumped out to open it, leaving the radio blaring into the night. As I slipped the gate latch and swung the gate wide, the dance music stopped in the middle of a bar. Someone had snapped off the radio.

I turned in the arc of the car lights, terror crawling along the back of my neck. The headlights blinked out, but not before I'd seen *him.* His face. . . .

There was no one to hear my screams as I fled. I couldn't run fast in high heels and there was no time to kick them off. Then there was only the wild, trapped terror, the heavy merciless hands, the horror of being dragged, helpless, into the deep darkness of the thicket beside the lane.

I half stumbled, half crawled to a sitting position and then to my feet. I was numb with shock. I realized vaguely that I was lucky to be alive, if I could call being alive lucky *now.*

I don't remember getting back into the car and driving up the hill to the house. I sagged in the doorway of Paul's study, disheveled, limp from exhaustion.

He jumped up from his desk and ran to me, his face white. "Peggy, what happened? Did you have an accident?"

I collapsed in his arms, sobbing hysterically. "Bruce shut the gate so I'd have to get out and open it. He was waiting in the dark. I couldn't get away from him, Paul; I couldn't get away! He's crazy! Oh Paul, he's crazy!"

Paul's arms stiffened around me. "My God," he whispered hoarsely. "Oh my God, I'll never forgive myself for bringing him here!"

I wouldn't let him call the police. I clung to him and sobbed over and over, "I'll die if anyone ever finds out! I'll die!"

But now that we knew from horrible experience the dark thing in Bruce's brain, I don't think either Paul or I could have faced our own consciences as long as he remained free. The decision was never ours to make, for the next morning we learned that Bruce Wade was dead. In the early hours of the morning he'd staggered as though drunk directly in front of Sid Carter's milk truck. His widowed mother said he'd come home earlier but must have suffered one of his spells and gone out again to try to walk it off, the way he so often did.

Bruce was dead, and it meant only one thing to me: a terrible relief. There wouldn't have to be any ugly publicity now. Aunt Ellen and Laura and Paul's folks would never know. The shameful secret could stay locked in my heart and Paul's forever.

In the next two weeks, I tried desperately to put that hour of horror out of my life. When I awoke sobbing from the nightmares which haunted me, Paul held me close in his arms, murmuring soft, soothing words: "Darling, darling, try to forget, to pretend it never happened. . . ."

For a little while I thought perhaps I could. We went to a party or two. We made ourselves dance, even laugh.

It never occurred to me that the worst wasn't past, that there could be anything more terrifying than what I'd already gone through, until the night Paul and I stared numbly at each other across the dinner table.

Dr. Lawrence had talked to us for a long time. We'd held nothing back; we were too frightened. The test left no doubt. The news which would have been received joyously only a few weeks ago plunged us into black despair.

The old doctor took a sheet of paper then and made a small chart on it. He studied the chart carefully and said things about a brief period of fertility each month. At last, in his quiet, reassuring voice, he told us the chances were nine out of ten that we had nothing to worry about. But that tenth chance! How could we be sure?

The months which should have been filled with happy anticipation dragged themselves out endlessly. There were times when I thought I couldn't bear not knowing, times when I woke screaming from the nightmares which never let me sleep for long at a time.

Sometimes when Paul thought I was asleep he'd slip out of bed and walk restlessly about the house. His forced cheerfulness during the day didn't fool me. Neither of us could talk about the baby or make plans for his future. We could only wait with that dragging fear at our hearts until we saw him, until we could be *sure.*

I hated the stork showers my friends and family gave for me. I hated having to exclaim over the tiny garments they lavished upon me. I lived for only one thing: to look at the face of my child, to see there a tiny replica of Paul. To have this nightmare once and for all behind us, to forget as far as possible that there'd ever been a man named Bruce Wade.

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It was all over at last. The searing pains came and passed and I slept heavily in a high hospital bed and awoke again to a beautiful May morning. A slim young nurse laid a blanket-wrapped bundle in my arms, and the world hung suspended as I turned my head slowly and looked down at my son for the first time. I stared and stared, shock jarring along every nerve in my body.

He didn't look like Paul; he didn't look like anybody. He was red and ugly and wrinkled.

"Take him away!" I sobbed. "Take him away!"

I was still sobbing crazily when Dr. Lawrence came into my room. His soothing words could do nothing for me now. "I won't have him!" I cried hysterically. "I won't take him home! I never want to see him again!"

The doctor gave me a hypo before Paul got back to the hospital, and he kept a no visitors sign on my door for the next few days. Hour after hour I lay still, staring numbly out the window. I saw the years stretching ahead, a child growing up with a strong body and a mind which travelled dark, frightening paths.

Why, why had this thing happened to Paul and me, whose lives had been so wonderful, so perfect? I beat my fists against the bed.

The day we left the hospital, Paul carried Michael carefully and his face was tender and protective when he looked down at the baby. It was uneasy and sad when he turned his brown head and looked at me.

We installed Michael in the beautiful nursery, just as though he were the precious son we'd dreamed of the first year of our marriage.

"All new babies are red and wrinkled and sort of ugly," Paul said firmly.

I turned away from the crib. Nothing he or the doctor said could convince me. The blood test they'd made wasn't conclusive; it only meant that Paul *could* be Michael's father. It hadn't proven that Bruce Wade *wasn't.*

I walked through days so black nothing made sense any more. I read everything I could find on the subject of heredity, and I could find no comfort in what I read. I thought of the healthy, normal children Paul and I had planned to have, and my heart twisted bitterly.

But Paul's heart was too soft to shut anything out, most of all a tiny, helpless baby. He took care of Michael when he was home, giving him his bottle, learning to bathe him expertly, handling him with gentle, loving hands.

I touched the baby as little as possible, and when his tiny fingers curled around my thumb I pulled my hand away sharply. I couldn't bear to look at him; I couldn't accept him.

One morning I found myself bending over his crib with a pillow clutched in my hands only inches away from his tiny red face. I straightened up and backed away slowly, my eyes wide and staring.

I almost did it! I thought wildly. *I almost did it!*

Even the terror of that night ten months ago hadn't equaled what I felt now. I'd caught myself in time today but there'd be tomorrow and the next day and the next.

Sooner or later. . . .

I hadn't realized it could be so easy.

I turned and fled, and for the rest of the day I was afraid to go into the nursery again. I had to force myself to fix the baby's bottle and take it up to him. My fingers trembled as they brushed against his cheek.

He'd be better off dead. Yes, yes, he would. But it would have to look like an accident. Paul and Dr. Lawrence mustn't suspect. The doctor had looked at me so strangely when I visited his office the previous week, and he'd kept Paul in his office and talked to him a long time after he sent me back out to the reception room. Yes, what I had to do would take time and careful planning.

When I heard Paul's car coming up the drive, I hurried up to the nursery and took Michael out of his crib and sat down in the low rocker with him. I forced myself to hold his small body against my breast as I rocked him. When Paul came into the room I made myself look up and smile at him.

The expression of relief and happiness which flooded his face twisted my heart for a moment. He looked relaxed for the first time in months as he stooped and kissed me and touched the baby gently, and I knew then how easy it would be to fool him, with his kind, unsuspecting heart, how easy it would be to make him think I was beginning to love Michael the way he did.

"Now that he's filling out, he looks like that baby picture your mother has of you," I lied. "I don't know why I couldn't see it before."

Paul squeezed my fingers, his blue eyes gentle. "Of course he looks like me, honey."

■ THE NEXT SATURDAY when we took the baby for a checkup I kept up my careful pretense—that I'd had a complete change of heart about him. I saw the same relief in the doctor's eyes that had been in Paul's.

Paul stayed behind in his office for a few minutes to talk to him and they were both smiling when they came out.

During those next days when anyone was around I fussed and cooed over the baby, but when I was alone in the house with him, I didn't go near him any more often than was necessary. One afternoon after I'd let him cry for a long time I gave in at last and went upstairs to try to quiet him before Paul came home. His face was red and swollen from crying so long. He was gnawing one little fist and I wondered guiltily if I'd let him go too long without his bottle.

I stooped and picked him up and he nuzzled his small head against my shoulder, his wails subsiding into whimpering little sobs. My arms tightened around him for an instant. He was so helpless, so dependent. Oh, if only I *could* believe the way Paul did, whether it was true or not!

I caught my thoughts up sharply, put the baby down in his bed and almost ran out of the room. Halfway down the stairs I stopped and leaned heavily against the rail.

I couldn't wait any longer. It had to be tomorrow at the latest.

When Paul came home Michael was crying again and I was in the kitchen fixing his bottle. I gave it to Paul to take up to him, with the excuse that I had to finish preparing supper.

Later he bathed the baby and put him to bed while I did the dishes. I stayed in the kitchen as long as I could before I joined him in the living room.

He threw his newspaper aside and pulled me down beside him on the couch. "You look tired, honey. Did Michael give you a busy day?"

"Every day's a busy one with a baby in the house," I answered carefully.

That night the old nightmare came back; I saw Bruce Wade's face. I screamed and ran, but there was no one to hear me, no one to help me.

My screams awakened me. Paul's arms were holding me close, his soothing voice was saying over and over, "It's all right,

Peggy. Nothing's going to hurt you ever again. It's over; it's all in the past, honey."

I lay awake a long time after he'd gone back to sleep. It wasn't in the past, I thought feverishly; it would never be over as long as Michael was there in the nursery instead of the beautiful son who would have been Paul's.

I woke up with a splitting headache the next morning. I could think of only one thing: to get it over as soon as possible. It was Saturday and Paul was home. At breakfast I suggested that we go up to the lake and stay overnight. We hadn't been to the cabin Paul's folks had up there in months.

Paul looked at me across the table, pleased. "Do you think we could manage Michael up there?"

"Of course we can manage him," I answered quickly. I was thinking of the steep steps leading down to the boathouse. How easy it would be to stumble, to let him slip from my arms!

When I went upstairs to dress and get the baby ready for the trip, my hands shook so I could hardly get his little shirts and diapers out of the chest. I carefully avoided looking toward his crib as I tumbled his things into a small overnight bag.

Hurriedly I fixed his bath water and stuck my elbow down in it to be sure it was the right temperature. I picked him up quickly and lowered him into the water, and then discovered I'd forgotten to lay out a washcloth. Holding him against the side of the little tub with one hand, I reached back to the chest. The top drawer stuck, and in my nervous haste I let go of the baby long enough to yank it open with both hands.

His queer gasp made me spin around again. He was sliding under the water and I stared in a thrill of horror. This was it—an accident, the sort of thing which happened every day. I stood there frozen to the spot. It would all be over in a few moments.

Tiny as he was, he went under fighting, flailing his arms and arching his back to keep his face out of the water as long as possible. Fighting with all his strength to keep the life that *God Himself had given him.*

With a strangled sob I snatched him out of the water and wrapped him in a towel and sank down in the rocker, clutching him against me. How could I ever have believed two terrible wrongs could make anything on God's earth right! With a terrible relief I knew the time was past when I could hurt him. Maybe I could never love him the way a mother should love her child, but I'd take good care of him and try to make him happy. Somehow I'd try to make up for what I'd almost done today.

The baby's lusty cries brought Paul hurrying into the nursery.

"He slipped under the water for a second," I said shakily. "It frightened him, that's all."

With loving concern on his thin face, Paul knelt beside my chair and soothed the baby, touching his small wet head, using a corner of the towel to mop his face dry. Paul's own brown head was still damp from the shower. As he bent closer to Michael—

I found myself staring down at the two of them. The way the baby's damp wisps of hair swirled away from the crown of his head in a half-cowlick . . . Paul's hair did that too. My heart leaped. It wasn't my imagination; I *knew* it wasn't! Looking down at them from this angle, the shape of their heads, the way their ears sort of stuck out. . . .

My arms tightened around Michael until he squirmed. Outside, the sun was golden. . . .

The End

She thought her face was clean...

Until *she took the "tissue test"!*

The "Tissue Test" convinced Virginia Mayo, co-star of Warner Bros.' "Captain Horatio Hornblower" that *there really is a difference* in cleansing creams.

We asked her to clean her face with her regular cleansing cream. Then to try Woodbury Cold Cream on her "immaculately clean" face and handed her a tissue to take it off.

The tissue told a startling story! Woodbury Cold Cream floated out hidden dirt!

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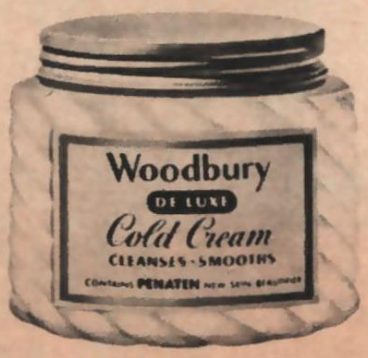

Woodbury Cold Cream

floats out hidden dirt...

penetrates deeper because it contains Penaten

Everybody wants to hug me! I use new

Mennen Baby Magic SKIN CARE!

...checks diaper odor...diaper rash

Bury your nose in my warm little neck. Smell good, don't I? Smooth your hand over my chubby little body. Better than satin, isn't it? My mother treats me to Mennen Baby Magic Skin Care, after my bath and with each diaper change. Smells lovely! Feels wonderful—because it has something special in it. New, protective "Purateen"! I even caught Mom borrowing from my unbreakable Squeeze Bottle for *her* skin. Can you beat it!

choice of nursery colors

I like silky-soft Mennen Baby Powder, too! Finest, softest powder made, with that delicate rosebud scent everybody loves. Gay Mother Goose pictures on the can. Plus an exciting Built-in Rattle. Makes powder time play time. Wonderful toy, when empty.

MENNEN

NO WEDDING NIGHT FOR ME (*Continued from page 21*) speed?" I asked in surprise.

"You'll be seeing Stephen tomorrow, won't you?"

"I—I'll have to."

"Then this," touching the ring, "will be a fine convincer. And Lissa, as one old heartbreaker to another, it's kinder to be tough. It makes the job of forgetting easier for the party of the second part."

I'd remember that. But what about the party of the first part?

I saw Stephen at the usual time the next night. It was raining, but he hadn't even pulled up close to the door.

"What was the idea of standing me up last night?" he demanded. "I waited over two hours for you."

"I forgot." I shrugged carelessly.

"Just like that, eh?" In a sudden flare of bad temper he took my shoulders in both hands and forced me to face him.

Every line in his haggard face confirmed Norma's statement of his unhappiness. I let myself see it now for the first time.

"My God, Lissa," he exclaimed, "are you going to make our lives any messier than they already are?"

In his anger he didn't realize he'd given me the perfect opening.

"Exactly the opposite. I intend to clean up the whole mess." I wrenched away from him and glued my eyes to the windshield wipers. They were ticking like a metronome. *So many ticks to get it said, so many ticks to say goodbye.* "I—oh, what's the use of words? You've said often enough they were no good between us. What you really meant was that all we had in common was our physical attraction." Quickly I made the final hurdle. "I was out with Dick last night and we got engaged," and I held up my hand with its dazzling rock.

I had to force myself to look at his face, and I turned a little sick as I saw his lips tremble. Then he got a quick hold on himself. "Why?" he managed. "Why?"

Hurriedly I wheeled Dick's advice into place before my poor wall collapsed. "Oh, I had to do something to make Dick take me seriously. All those public proposals were just a joke. This boulder on my finger is the confirmation I was after."

"Oh, dear God!" he groaned. "I don't believe it! Ann and I couldn't be so wrong."

"Oh, but you are. Dad is the one who's always had my number. Blood will tell, you know."

In his own misery he missed my bitterness. He banged one clenched fist into the other. "For the first time I know what it feels like to want to slap a girl's face." Then, with more control: "Actually, I've only got myself to blame for being so easily taken in." He released the emergency brake. "Where can I drop you?" in frigid politeness.

"Right here," I said, opening the car door. "I'll get this cab coming now." And I didn't dare look back.

■ I WAS AFRAID to go in the house. Before I turned the knob I slipped my engagement ring into my pocket—my family would be angry enough without flaunting that.

They were shocked almost speechless when I told them. When Dad found his voice he burned up the air with stinging accusations about my abrupt switch in affections. I was glad Ann wasn't there; I might have broken down completely.

I called Dick finally and escaped.

He was all for a quick wedding but I wouldn't hear of it. I told him flippantly, "I want to be engaged to a wealthy guy long enough to enjoy it."

"That," he laughed, "is what I adore about you, Lissa, your frankness."

So he made a circus of our engagement. When some friend of his commented on my looks, he laughed, "I always marry beautiful girls as an insurance against alimony. They marry again."

A good, solid sentiment to base a marriage on. But I was living merely for the moment anyway.

The moment, however, was far from easy to take. My home life was almost unbearable. They'd swallowed the story I'd told Stephen hook, line and sinker.

Suddenly it occurred to me to try for an out-of-town job. I searched the want ads and when I came across one for a secretary to the manager of a luxurious hotel resort I applied for it and was accepted right away.

Dick was furious but when he couldn't budge me he finally agreed that it might be for the best. He planned to drive up every week end.

Mother and Dad made no objections whatever. I had a conviction that they were washing their hands of me.

Not Ann. She said as she watched me pack, "I hear it's a luxurious place, Lissa."

"Oh, paradise in Cellophane. I only hope I can stand the severe change in atmosphere." I had to be nasty; it was my only shield.

"I know what you mean. But don't let's have any hard feelings between us. Why are you going away instead of marrying Dick?"

I glared defiantly at her. "To have one last, unsupervised, unchaperoned fling before I become an old married woman."

"How you've changed!"

I laughed. "Not really. I'm just peeling off a few artificial layers of inhibitions. I'm really being me."

Poor Ann was completely baffled. "I feel I've lost you too," she said sadly.

I ached to throw my arms around her, but I had to go through with this.

From the station I called Norma Blake. I said quickly, "You were so right about Stephen and me. It was just an infatuation. Now that we've got things straightened out between us, why don't you bring those two together again? They," the words were harder to get out than I'd thought, "were meant for each other."

I left the telephone without waiting to hear her answer. . . .

The days at the hotel were brilliant, the nights beautiful. I endured them, sending Ann cards that outglowed the advertisements in reply to her warm, friendly letters.

Gradually she began to mention Stephen. They attended a lecture together and went to an open-air concert. She spent a week end at the Blake cottage. And finally what I'd worked so hard for: they were engaged again. The date was set very soon for the wedding. She still wanted me for maid of honor. I begged her to let me off but she insisted in every letter and I finally wrote that I'd come.

■ MY DRESS, which I'd bought the winter before, had to be taken in inches the morning of the wedding, I'd lost so much weight. I was grateful for the excitement that caught everyone up and obliterated any embarrassment.

I did hear one of Ann's friends whisper to Norma, "Ann's a brave girl to have her here. Would you believe anyone with such a lovely face could be such a—"

I didn't wait to hear the rest. I felt as if they were talking about a stranger anyway.

The feeling persisted in the church. It went with me down the long aisle between the rows of faces. Faces that said, *See what chances you take when you adopt a child? All they did for her—that's grati-*

"I cracked up the same plane 10 times!"

"We retook the plane crash for 'The Groom Wore Spurs' ten times. The director made me twist and turn the wheel 'til my hands were stinging red!

And roping 'the villain' was tough on my hands again...

But I smoothed them with soothing Jergens Lotion . . .

It kept them soft and lovely for romantic closeups!"

CAN YOUR LOTION OR HAND CREAM PASS THIS FILM TEST?

To soften, a lotion or cream should be absorbed by upper layers of skin. Water won't "bead" on hand smoothed with Jergens Lotion. It contains quickly-absorbed ingredients that doctors recommend, no heavy oils that merely coat the skin with oily film.

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Prove it with this simple test described above . . .

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STILL 10c TO $1.00 (PLUS TAX)

The man-in-your-life will rave about this Libby's Peach dessert . . . and the "girls" in your bridge club will try their best to get your recipe!

The ice itself has such a luscious "mystery flavor"—an exotic richness that keeps folks guessing what it's made of. And those Libby's Peaches—gorgeous golden halves that taste as though they'd been marinated in sunshine! They make *any* dessert luxurious-tasting.

Here's the easy, inexpensive recipe: Soften ½ tbsp. gelatin in 1 tbsp. cold water; dissolve over hot water. Dissolve ½ c. sugar in ½ c. milk. Add ½ c. mashed avocado, ⅛ tsp. salt, ¼ c. chopped pecans, ½ c. orange juice, ¼ c. lemon juice, and the gelatin. Fold in 1 stiffly beaten egg white. Freeze in refrigerator tray, stirring occasionally. Serve topped with pecans and plenty of well-drained Libby's Peaches. Be sure to get Libby's—there's such a difference! *Libby, McNeill & Libby, Chicago 9, Ill.*

LOOK TO Libby's FOR PERFECTION!

tude for you. Whisper, whisper. Blood will tell.

Then Stephen standing there. I could have put out my hand and touched him. Ann came on the next throb of music in her glistening satin dress, her face lucent with happiness, and put her hand in his.

The minister's words came like the steady drop of time . . . forever and forever.

Now my two beloveds were married, my Ann and my Stephen. It wasn't so much that I'd repaid Ann in some measure for her love for me that accounted for this deep, sure feeling that glowed within me. I, Lissa, of the anonymous background, had scaled the heights. At least I'd achieved a sense of equality with her and Stephen.

That no one would ever know increased its value to me.

Even at the reception only Norma noticed that I wore no engagement ring. For I too have my dreams, and somewhere out in the world there must be another Stephen for me. *The End*

PATERNITY RAP (*Continued from page 46*) said anything. I was as stunned as though something had fallen on my head. But Papa was linking his arm through John's and propelling him toward the dimly-lighted hall into which Mama was rushing to meet them. "Amy never said anything," Papa said, "not a word!"

Everything was out of my control. I felt sick and ashamed. Papa was patting John on the back now. "Do you know what this means to me, son? Mama and I can retire and turn the grocery business over to you lock, stock and barrel. Amy won't need that second year at the teachers' college now."

I guess I thought John would surely wiggle out of it then, but he didn't. When Mama and Papa left us alone he took me in his arms again. It was only when I had gone to bed and had my head buried in my pillow that I started to cry, believing I had tricked John into his promise of marriage. I would never forget what I had done to force his hand. I could never forget or let him forget either.

Even on our wedding night, with his ring safely on my finger, there was the bitter suspicion that he had married me only because of an old promise which he didn't dare break. He always kept his word, this man of iron will, of strong morals, whose arms were around me now, whose warm breath was soft against my bare shoulder. Even then I didn't know how to tear down the wall between us, to tell him how deeply I loved him. I could only tease and torment him.

"I really forced you into marriage, didn't I?" I said. "I saw Nan Welsh's face when we went out of the church."

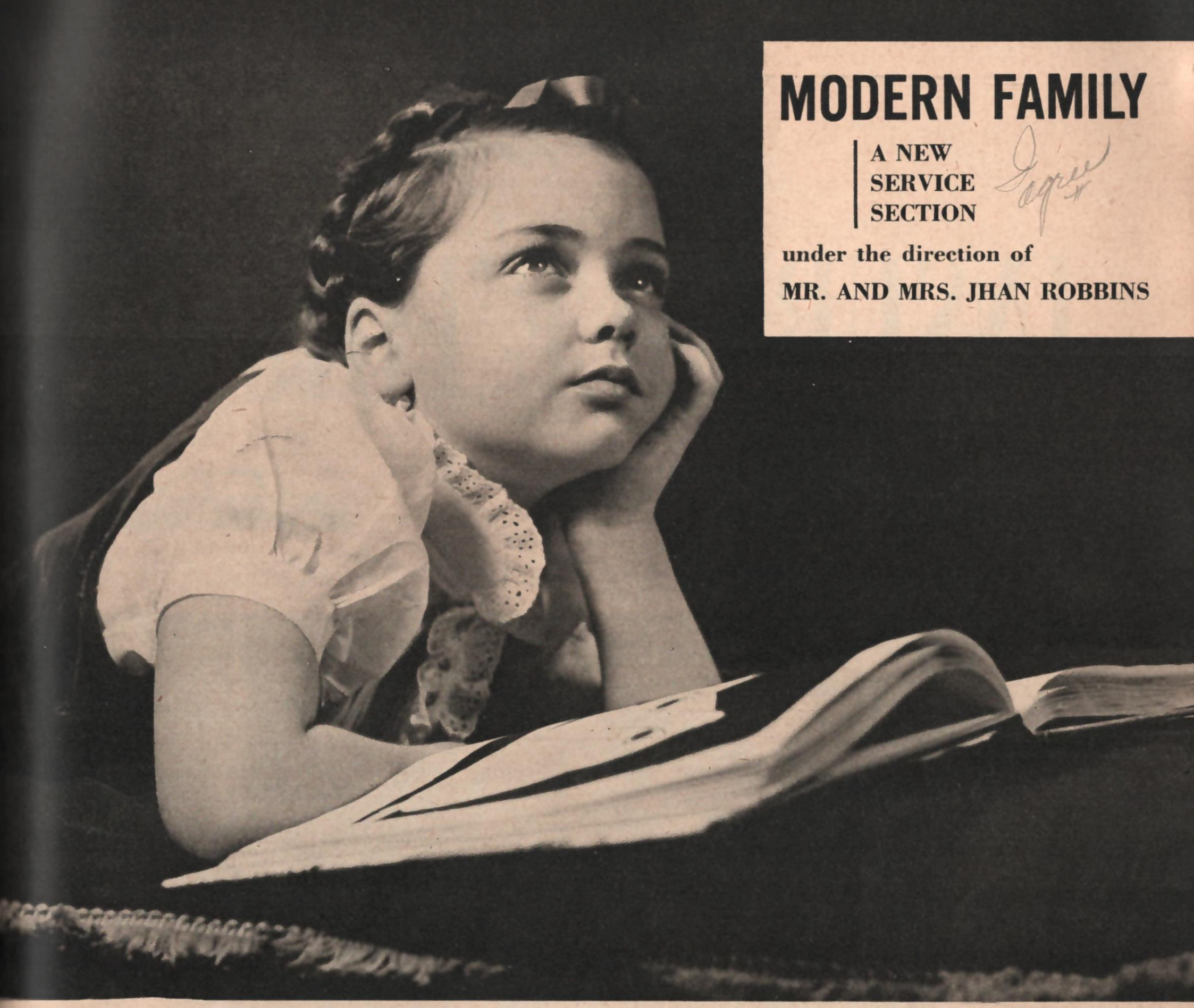
"Nan and I were just good friends, as I've told you," he answered. "I always felt sorry for her."

But I teased him about other things and above all about his strong character, his good reputation. "Don't you ever think of anything but business?" I'd say as he kept enlarging the grocery store.

When the babies came, Elsie and Ken, he'd opened a small appliance store a block away. "I'm afraid they'll never know the hard-working businessman they call Dad," I would scold him. "Why don't you let down and have fun for a change?"

"Wish I could," he said, "but your father always had such faith in me, thought I'd make such a big success."

Elsie was twelve when John opened still another store, furniture this time. The ink was hardly dry on the mortgage papers when the (*Continued on page 77*)



MODERN FAMILY

A NEW SERVICE SECTION

under the direction of

MR. AND MRS. JHAN ROBBINS

Photograph by Tana Hoban

LET HER CHOOSE HER OWN FUTURE

Whether boy or girl,

teach your child

to be proud of any

honest, useful work

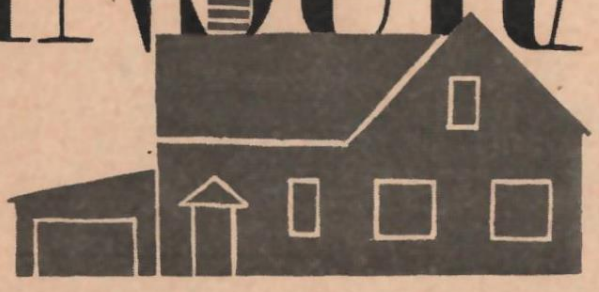
BY ROBERT SCHUMAN

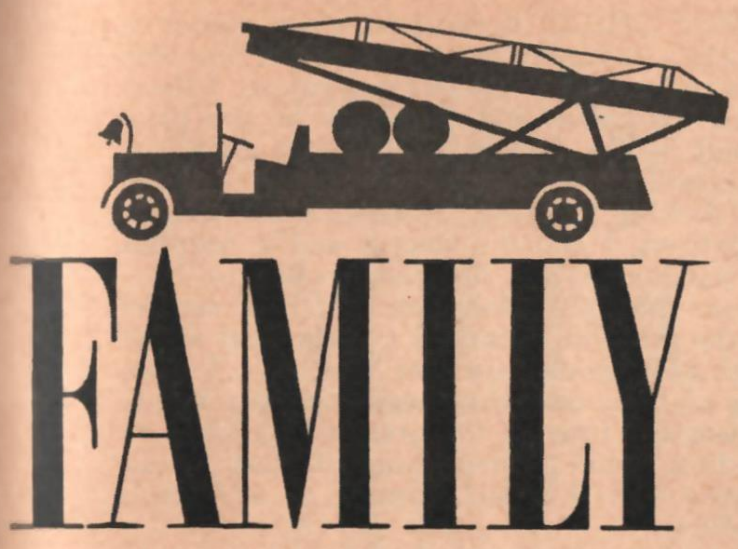
■ THE OTHER DAY I visited some friends I hadn't seen for some time. They had an addition to the family, a four-year-old towhead who was racing around in a toy fire engine and screeching like a siren. "I guess Philip's at the stage where he's going to grow up to be a fireman," I remarked jokingly, but his parents answered gravely, "No, he's going to be a doctor. Aren't you, Philip?"

The child looked at them blankly, then mouthed an obedient, "Yes."

On the surface there would appear to be nothing wrong in a parent's looking ahead to a career for his child. But suppose little Philip displays a sudden interest in motors and shows all the makings of an engineer? To be a doctor is fine, but only if you *want* to be one and your personality is suited to it. By thwarting his (*Continued on page 107*)

INSURANCE FOR OUR





FAMILY

Do you think
it's inviting bad luck
to bolster yourself financially
against death,
accidents or fire?
Here's how one mother
makes a few pennies a day
protect the family she
already has—
and pay for the babies to come

BY ANNIS M. O'NEAL

■ "IT TAKES a certain kind of mind to understand insurance," I tell David sadly. "A male mind. There is man's work and woman's work in this world, don't ever forget it, and insurance is on the man's end."

"Can't you understand it at all?" six-year-old David asks sympathetically; Daddy is out of town again and David feels his responsibilities as the man of the house.

"Of course," I assure him, "but I have to work at it. I know exactly what it means, but all the words they use. . . ."

I think most women share my confusion over the jargon used by professional insurance people. After all, what we are interested in is what our insurance policies can do for us.

But in spite of the confusion and the instinctive turning away from statistics and tables of figures, the insurance arrangements of our family must be our business as well as our husbands'. If tomorrow found you suddenly without him, your whole future would be colored by the fact that you either had or didn't have adequate insurance.

How protected do you feel when you consider what a fire could do to your personal belongings, what a broken arm could do to your budget? When you see the havoc created by the mere fact that a dependent mother-in-law must be fed and housed, do you do any more than swear that you'll never be that kind of burden? Don't you feel that you must *insure* your future? Other people's mishaps and misfortunes should be like signs to make us stop, look and listen to the man who can help you plan for your needs.

Insurance does a number of things for us, protective things. It can assure a wife and children a certain basic income for a number of years after the death of her husband. In the event that he does not die, it can be like a steady savings account which adds to the security of his and his wife's old age. In other words, the main purpose of life insurance is to replace income lost through death or by retirement. Other types of insurance offer other types of protection which we will touch on later.

In theory, between ten and fifteen per cent of your steady take-home pay should go into savings and insurance. To figure out whether it's going to be over or under ten per cent you're going to have to sit down with a pencil and a husband and make with the figures. First you'll list your fixed expenses, such as rent, which can't be whittled down. Next you list the flexible expenses such as food, entertainment and clothing. If you find that what you have left is below ten per cent, maybe you can operate a squeeze play on those flexible expenses.

Right here I will state that there comes a time when the squeezing must stop. It is just as important not to carry too much insurance as it is to carry enough. You have to strike a happy medium between being grown up enough to deny yourself some things for the sake of future security and being the stern, Spartan type of soul who lets all of today slide by without any fun because of fear of the future.

The two things we must decide first in planning our insurance setup are these: what are our needs as far as protection is concerned and what can we afford?

Your needs and mine, for the most part, can't be so very different. Our first resolve was to hang on to the ten thousand dollar straight life insurance policy my husband had before we were married. The benefits of this policy would, in the event of death, be paid off to me in monthly installments, assuring me of a small income during the time the children were young and while I was getting prepared to go back to work. I would receive a small lump sum at the time of his death for burial expenses. ("And if you can't bury me for that," he says, " just let the whole thing go.")

This policy helps us in other ways. We were able to borrow a substantial amount on it when we bought our house and it has a good cash surrender value. In other words, we could get a lot of our money back, just like a savings account, and we could both enjoy it.

This is all the straight life insurance we have, and we feel that it is adequate in our case for immediate protection. Since my husband is an employee of the Federal Government he is not covered by Social Security, but there is a fairly adequate pension system. Another reason for what some might consider our inadequate protection lies in the fact that I would be able to support my family if I had to. Others might have a harder time getting back into the business world or for reasons of health might consider it impossible. In such cases it is well to investigate all the sources of income that would be available and try desperately to keep that possible income from falling below the level at which you can live.

■ IT'S A GOOD idea at this moment to check the new Social Security law to see where you stand. Perhaps you are now covered by it, whereas you weren't before. Both the retirement and survivors' benefits are higher than they were before, based on your average monthly pay during the past years.

Now, for instance, if a man's average monthly income has been two hundred dollars, he would, at sixty-five, receive sixty-five dollars a month until his wife became sixty-five, when they would receive ninety-seven dollars and fifty cents a month. This is the same amount this man's wife, with one child, would get in case of her husband's death; without the child, she would only get forty-eight dollars and fifty cents. If you're covered by Social Security you should take it into account when you're figuring (*Continued on page 80*)

"Breast feeding is wonderful if you can do it," says this mother of two-going-on-three. "As for me, I know when I'm beaten"

BY JOYCE MAC ARTHUR

Photograph by Tana Hoban

I'M NOT GOING TO NURSE MY BABY

■ MY FIRST CHILD, born eight years ago, was a bottle baby. It never occurred to me that she might be anything else. I was very young; I lived in a "bottle" neighborhood. The talk on the park benches and in the doctors' offices was all about formulas, sterilizers and how to keep rubber nipples from sticking together. Following the neighborhood pattern, I chose a doctor and a hospital that believed that babies did best on bottles.

Five years passed before we had our second child. In the interval I learned a great deal about mothering. Left alone much of the time, I read everything on baby care that I could get my hands on. This was the time of the great swing back to breast feeding. I met a new group of alert young mothers who talked about nursing as a solemn maternal duty.

When I told my husband that I was going to nurse our second baby he was surprised and delighted and when I put my new little one to the breast for the first time I knew a tender thrill unlike anything I have ever experienced.

This is not the story of a failure. I'm stubborn. I succeeded in nursing my son for nine months, until he was ready to take over on the cup. But at what cost! Like many modern American women who live a fast-paced life in the world's most complicated civilization, I was never cut out to be a nursing mother. Some doctors told me it was physical. I was too fair-skinned. I worked too hard. I tired easily. Others insisted it was psychological. I was too nervous. I lacked self-confidence.

I suspect it was a mixture of both. I knew I was in for a struggle the minute I got home. The baby cried all night. I put him to the breast every half hour. I wept with fatigue and despair. In the morning I found that I had developed a nipple crack, and when I weighed the baby after what should have been his 10 a.m. feeding (it came at 8:30) I discovered to my alarm that he had only taken an ounce.

It was the first of many nights like that. The baby thrived and gained but try as I would I could not satisfy him. I drank quarts of milk, water and fruit juice, nibbled all day on lettuce and tomatoes, busted the budget to buy steak and liver. I took a nap each day, eliminated our social life at night (I didn't dare skip a feeding). In short, I put myself on as rigid a training schedule as any prize fighter or football player.

Gradually I won the fight. The milk supply increased until I was able to leave off supplementary bottle feedings. My skin toughened until that first "bite" no longer brought tears of pain to my eyes. The baby's night howls settled down to restless whimpers, and by that time he was ready to be weaned. I had successfully nursed my baby.

I'm not going to do it again. We are waiting now for the birth of our third. Although my doctor tells me it's quite possible that nursing would come easier this time I'm not even giving it a thought.

I still believe in the value of breast feeding. Babies do best on mother's milk. Breast-feeding, better than anything else, provides for the nutritional and psychological needs of your baby. *If you can do it.* It is not, however, worth the kind of struggle I put up. For the best part of a year I sacrificed myself, my husband and my older child —indeed, our whole way of life—to what is at best only a generally accepted theory.

Personally, I am convinced that it is the mother, not the baby, who loses out on the bottle. My pediatrician will work out a good formula. I will remember to give my new baby plenty of fondling and skin contact. He or she will know the warmth and comforting closeness of a mother. Under such circumstances, the bottle equals the breast and my baby will be healthy and happy. *The End*

DOES YOUR CHILD LIE?

It may spell trouble, but it isn't the lie itself that's important

BY HARRIET CRITTENDEN

Photograph by Tana Hoban

■ "SHOULD JOHNNY be telling fibs so often? Is it just a phase or will it lead to serious trouble? What should I do about it?" We parents often ask these questions of teachers, of one another, of ourselves.

But, first of all, what is a lie?

What is a lie from an adult's point of view is not necessarily a lie from the child's. Especially is this true when children are five or younger. Like primitive savages, young children are creatures of sensation and intuition. They weave strange explanations of their newly-discovered universe.

My own five-year-old son is an example. He had just had his hair cut at the barber's. On our way home he began chuckling to himself. "When we were at the barber's," he told me, "an old lady came in and she kicked the barber and he fell down."

I asked, "She was a make-believe old lady, wasn't she?"

"Yes, a make-believe old lady," he agreed.

To point out the fact that we parents know a story is make-believe helps young children distinguish between fact and fancy. Not only should parents refrain from sitting in judgment on young children's imaginative stories but we should remember never to ridicule. If we do, children raise a barrier and keep their fantasies to themselves. When they can confide their fairy tales to their parents, they will never use them as secret retreats from reality.

By the time a child is six or seven he should be old enough to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Why do these older children tell untruths and what can parents do not only to halt patterns of deceit but to build habits of honesty in their children?

The answer is intelligent guidance at the first signals of trouble. Persistent lying in a school-age child spells trouble, but it isn't the lie that's important. It's the motive or intention behind the lie.

What are the most common motives or intentions?

A child may lie when he's covering up some misdeed.

At the Child Institute Group of Johns Hopkins University, a four-year-old aggressive youngster lied to cover up the theft of a toy belonging to the whole group. The group supervisor did not deal with the lie but with the theft. Instead of accusing the child he brought out a similar toy, offering it to the group to take apart. Not permitting the youngster to share in the play, he told him, "You've already played with one like this, haven't you?"

After enviously watching the other children taking apart the toy, the boy volunteered, "I will bring back the one I took." And he did. Realizing that he was missing out on the fun because he had taken something belonging to the whole group, he stopped stealing. Automatically he stopped lying too.

A child may lie when he's afraid of being punished.

A child needs discipline. He is unhappy without it. Destroying property, arousing his parents' disapproval in any way make him feel guilty and inferior. But unfair or illogical punishments make him afraid and resentful, and lead to lying.

Perhaps you yourself have been guilty of punishing your child for—of all things—telling the truth.

"Johnny, did you bend the point of my fountain pen?"

When Johnny admits that he did, he is deprived of his allowance for the week. He would be rather foolish if he didn't decide to tell a whopper the next time and keep his allowance.

A better way to handle the situation would be for his mother to say, "I'm having the fountain pen fixed. If you break it again your allowance will be cut off for a week." And mean what she says. Firm, quiet control that prevents bad behavior often makes punishment unnecessary.

A child may lie when he feels insecure and unhappy.

Children feel insecure and unhappy chiefly because they feel unloved and unwanted. Sometimes we don't realize how much we are neglecting our duties to provide love and security in our own homes. In a study of twenty-one parents and their children, conducted by Gertrude Gilmore Lafore, Ph. D., it was found that the children who felt the most insecure had parents who did a lot of threatening, blaming, ignoring and cautioning of their children. These same parents failed to teach their children the property rights of others, they rarely reassured their children in frightening situations and they failed to treat their children as social companions.

The parent who says, "Let's see the drawing you just made," or suggests, "Let's (*Continued on page 81*)

SLEEPING COMFORT FOR

Photographs by Tana Hoban

Best thing that's happened in the nursery in years is the mitered-corner sheet for crib and youth bed. Even the most violently wriggling baby can't pull it loose. In sturdy white muslin or pastel percales and knits, it cuts bedmaking time in half, it needs no ironing and—good news—it's cheaper than old-style full sheet

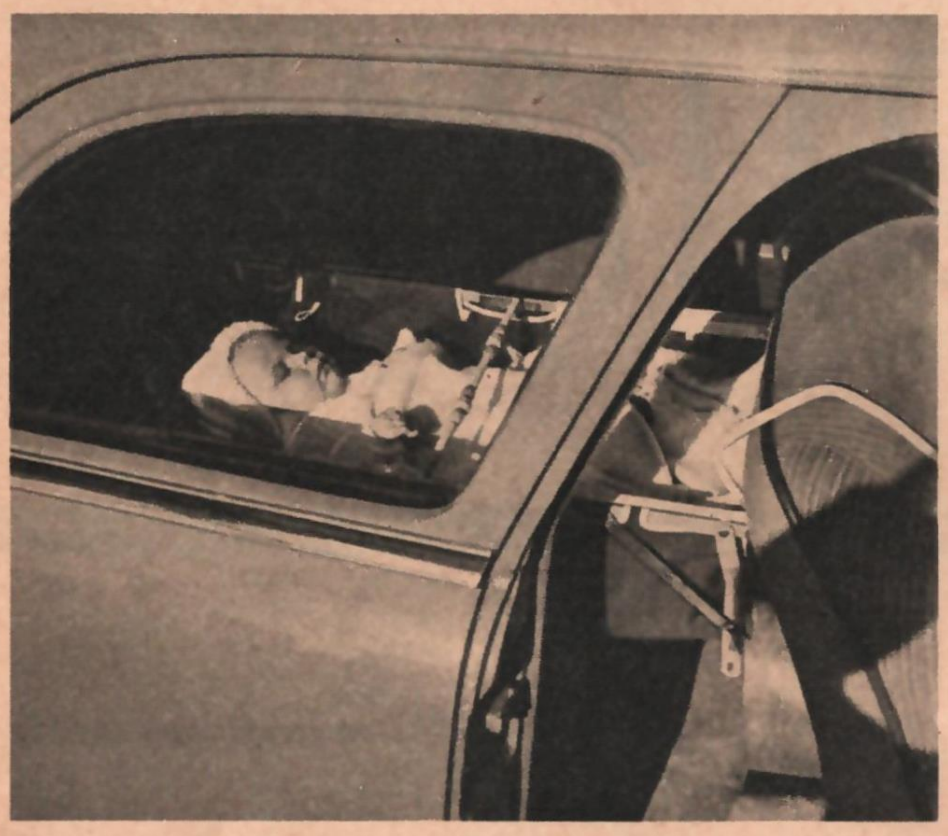
Choose nighties or pajamas with an eye on the thermometer, not the calendar. Many a restless sleeper has been cured by a pair of warm pajamas and a wide-open window. Night clothing for youngsters beyond the diaper stage should have big buttons or snaps to encourage independent toileting. Size should be roomy

Economize where you must but don't skimp on a sturdy, roomy crib and a firm, no-sag mattress. A horsehair mattress will outlast all the babies you can produce. A hair-top innerspring, most popular model, gives excellent service. Cotton mattress with hand-rolled edge is satisfactory if turned often, inexpensive to replace

Child-size rocking chair suggests to four-year-old that dressing and undressing might be fun. Giant-sized adult furniture is often frightening, makes youngsters feel smaller and more helpless than ever. A pair of portable wooden steps will bring light switches, sink, bureau drawers within reach of your inquiring four-year-old

YOUR CHILD

About 80 per cent of the clothing and furniture you buy your young ones is designed for dreamland. Garish colors, rickety construction, nightwear that is shrunken or oversized can mean sleepless hours for baby—and for you. Here Modern Family offers a selection of what's best in today's slumber market



If you are sitting to the right of the driver, even a minor auto accident may mean painful dashboard bumps. Don't carry your child in your arms. In a cradle hitched to the back of the front seat, your baby is the safest passenger in the car. Don't forget to buckle the strap. Later, bed converts to form small, cozy chair

If baby is diapered frequently, modern waterproof pants will rarely raise a rash. Eight weeks is not too early to try. Pants selected for nightwear should fit loosely around waist and thighs to allow evaporation to take place. A double diaper used at bedtime helps keep moisture away from skin. Rinse panties daily

Streamlined bassinet without dust-catching ruffles can be wheeled from room to room to keep Mother company. Collapsible, it's also fine for overnight visits to Grandma. Deep, straight sides provide ample protection for child up to eight months. Quilted plastic liner won't crack, wipes clean. Safety mattress fits tightly in corners

Smart station wagon sides and toboggan-type body make this baby carriage a luxury item, but yours needn't bust the budget. Repairs, however, are expensive. Look for tight joints, fused nuts and bolts, hub caps with firm clasps and reinforced axles. Ease carriage gently down steps. Guard against rust and mildew

See page 112 for items illustrated

My second child by

NATURAL CHILDBIRTH

■ "THE TROUBLE with you natural childbirth patients," sniffed the nurse, "is that you come back too often."

We laughed together and the sound was strange in that stark white-tiled delivery room where I was awaiting the birth of my third child. Even in the best maternity hospitals, moans and hysterical weeping are still the language of labor. But I had to laugh. The nurse was right. The mothers in this country who have delivered their babies by natural childbirth—they now number several thousand—are notorious repeaters.

I can understand it, for I am one of them. Eighteen months ago the birth of my second child taught me what nature intended childbirth to be like. There were no drugs, no anesthetics. I didn't want any and I needed none, for I knew not one moment of real pain or of the fright that brings imagined pain. No forceps wrenched at my baby's head, no instrument of any kind was used to assist the birth. Through my own efforts I bore my child.

It was hard work—the hardest work I have ever done in my life—but it brought the richest reward the world can give a woman.

The birth of my third child only a few days ago was even easier than the second. This was surprising, for last year everything went smoothly, according to the book, and this birth seemed jinxed with uncertainties, nerve-racking annoyances and colossally poor timing.

You see, we bought a house last month. We didn't want to; we had to. Our lease was up, our landlord wanted to move back in, we needed shelter in a hurry. We grabbed the first piece of halfway suitable real estate that came our way. We didn't do too badly, considering. It's a big house, which we certainly need. It's old and comfortable looking, a place where we can raise our children without too much effort and do a little writing on the side.

"We're certainly in luck," I said as I wrapped dishes in old newspapers. "We move tomorrow, take a week to get settled, three days to rest up and then have the baby."

At that exact moment, the first labor pain hit me.

"But it can't be!" I protested. "The baby isn't due for ten days!"

"Tell that to the baby," my husband advised.

I'd certainly picked a night for it. A thunderstorm was howling down from the mountain. Rain gushed in sheets against the windows, and we knew the highway into town would be as slick as glass. It's a dangerous road anyway, steep, narrow and full of blind turns. To make things worse, the housekeeper I had so efficiently arranged to employ was away on another case.

Stubbornly I went on packing dishes. "Maybe I can hold out until morning," I said.

But a few hours later my husband was pounding on a neighbor's door. It's good to have friends when you need them. That woman sloshed through ankle-deep mud at two in the morning to sleep in my house and take care of my two other children while I went into New York to have my baby.

It was a wild ride, thirty miles through rain and blackness in a balky station wagon. We were drenched to the skin and thoroughly miserable but before I would let my husband ring the bell at the hospital door I powdered my nose, combed my hair and put on some lipstick. "I'm not going to go slinking in here like a drowned cat," I said. I wanted to look the way I felt—like a girl on her way to keep a big date.

■ ONE of the nicer things about natural childbirth is that husbands are treated with respect. They aren't pushed into a corner and forgotten or brusquely told to go home. Husbands have a part to play. They stay with their wives throughout the long, slow hours of first-stage

**The Creator,
Mrs. Robbins feels,
meant childbirth to be
womankind's greatest reward.
Pain, suffering
and anesthesia
distort His purpose.
Describing the birth
of her third child,
she takes the
reader with her
through a
practice labor of
childbirth without fear**

labor. They learn to massage backs, to adjust pillows, to help their wives maintain a relaxed and cheerful feeling.

Jhan settled in a chair beside my bed, put one hand on mine and with the other began to rattle a newspaper. From time to time we looked at one another and smiled. It was a domestic scene of quiet comfort. No one would think a baby was only a few hours away. The last hours of the night passed and dawn began to come through the windows.

"This one is certainly in no hurry," I complained. "I'm not getting anywhere at all."

Jhan is a veteran at this game. "Whenever you say that," he commented, "I know you're all ready to go," and he hurried from the room to call the nurse.

She came on the run, looking a little angry. "It's a wonder you natural childbirth mothers don't have all your babies right in bed," she scolded. "If you don't make any noise, how can we tell when you're ready for the delivery room?"

"You might take a look," I suggested humbly.

Natural labors nearly always come along faster than anyone anticipates. Now there was a rush of feet, the squeak of a stretcher, the whine of an approaching elevator.

I sat up and brushed my husband's lips hurriedly in a see-you-later kiss. Then I was off.

My only complaint about the rest of that delivery was that everything happened too fast. I suppose it often does with a third baby, but this was so hasty that it was downright undignified. One push sufficed. It was over before I even got started. In the parlance of the delivery room I "had it easy."

This baby was small; she weighed six pounds and ten ounces. In appearance she resembled the other Robbins, with a snub nose, very blue eyes and high, wide cheekbones that gave her face a merry, smiling look. We named her Margaret and we call her Meg. I loved her instantly and I believe she felt and responded to that rush of affection. Right there on the delivery table she cuddled down into my arms as though she knew that that was where she belonged.

"Tell me, Mrs. Robbins," one of the nurses asked curiously; "what's natural childbirth really like? How does it feel?"

I touched my finger lightly to the tip of Meg's pink nose and considered the question. "Well, part of the time you feel as though you're shopping for a diamond ring or a mink coat," I answered thoughtfully, "and part of the time you feel as though you're in church. At the end you feel like running into the street and shooting off firecrackers. I guess it's like Christmas and the Fourth of July all rolled into one."

■ NATURAL DELIVERIES have that effect on women and on their husbands, too. For childbirth as I firmly believe the Great Planner meant us to experience it brings a satisfaction that is so intense I really cannot put it into words. I can only say that if all your children, like my first, have been brought into this world with the "help" of the conventional demerol injection, gas inhalation and the cold touch of a pair of steel forceps, you have my pity. You have missed something, a rare bonus of happiness that rightfully belongs to all women.

Natural childbirth is not the old, ignorant, agonizing business our mothers or grandmothers went through before science paid any attention to the problem of childbirth pain. In those days the experience was so dreadful that the onset of birth was regarded with almost as much solemnity as the onset of death. It left many a woman and her husband shaking their heads and saying, "God willing, never again!" (*Continued on page 80*)

LET THE COFFEE POT DO IT

Every home needs two coffee pots—one for your morning Java, the other to do just about everything else

■ ONE of the most useful kitchen utensils you can own is an extra eight-cup size aluminum coffee percolator.

When you mix a batter of waffles use the pot instead of a bowl. The egg batter won't splatter your work surface, because the walls of the coffee pot are so high. The batter won't spill over the edge, for you will use the handy spout for pouring. You'll also find the handle convenient when the cakes are poured onto the griddle.

Your percolator is a safety utensil as well. It will save you many a burn when you cook a batch of French fried potatoes or do some other form of deep fat frying. The procedure is simple. Spoon cold shortening into the pot after making sure that it is thoroughly dry. Let the fat heat while you prepare the spuds. Should the fat flare up, just flip the hinged lid of the coffee pot shut and the flames are extinguished. When the food is sufficiently fried, pour the grease out through the spout into its permanent container. If the spout has a sieved back, the fat is strained in the same operation.

When you plan to cook asparagus or broccoli for dinner, the coffee pot is also put to good service. After you wash either vegetable and remove the hard white ends, stand the stalks upright and add about four inches of water. This permits the hard stalks to boil merrily while the tender ends are gently steamed. Since the container is tall and narrow, the vegetables are cooked without being broken.

Use your aluminum percolator to clean silverware when unexpected and important company finds you with a stack that's tarnished. Fill the pot with hot water, add a tablespoonful of washing soda. Put the knives, spoons and forks in upright, handles sticking out. Boil five minutes. Drain, rinse and turn your sparkling bright silverware out on a clean linen towel to dry. *The End*

DESSERTS

A gooey piece of pecan pie may do a bit of damage to the family waistlines but it will leave you with the feeling that the world—and particularly the kitchen—is a pretty good place after all

BY WINIFRED CARR

ARE GOOD FOR YOU

■ LEFT OVER from the days when ice cream was used as a bribe to get us to finish our spinach is the feeling that there is something naughty about eating dessert. Nutritionists and dentists, too, have done their best to make us feel guilty instead of ecstatic whenever we sink a fork into a fudge layer cake or dig a spoon into a butterscotch sundae.

You can't argue with them. Desserts aren't necessary. Although oranges, tomatoes, string beans, liver, milk, eggs, bread and potatoes are "musts," you could live a healthy hundred years without fancy sweets.

Yes, but who'd want to? I once knew a big fat jolly cook who used to caution everyone at the table to save a little room for the "hereafter." I suppose she grew fat after years of eating her own dreamy cooking but personally I think there is something a little wrong with the man or woman who winds up an otherwise delicious meal by saying, "Nothing else for me. Just a little black coffee, please."

Unhappily, even desserts can be dull. You know how it is with the main course; occasionally there seem to be weeks when you can't think of anything to serve on Sunday but meat loaf, peas and baked potatoes. And usually, at the tail end of this uninspired menu, comes apple pie, chocolate cake or vanilla ice cream. Nothing to sneer at, but nothing to write home about.

The dinners that land on the table during the cold, raw days of late winter and early spring are particularly difficult to plan. The rich foods of the winter months seem heavy and tiresome. The fresh, palatable foods of summer are not yet in season. Now, more than ever, your family will appreciate a really sensational dessert.

Here are some favorites. The recipes are tested and simple to make. Follow directions exactly.

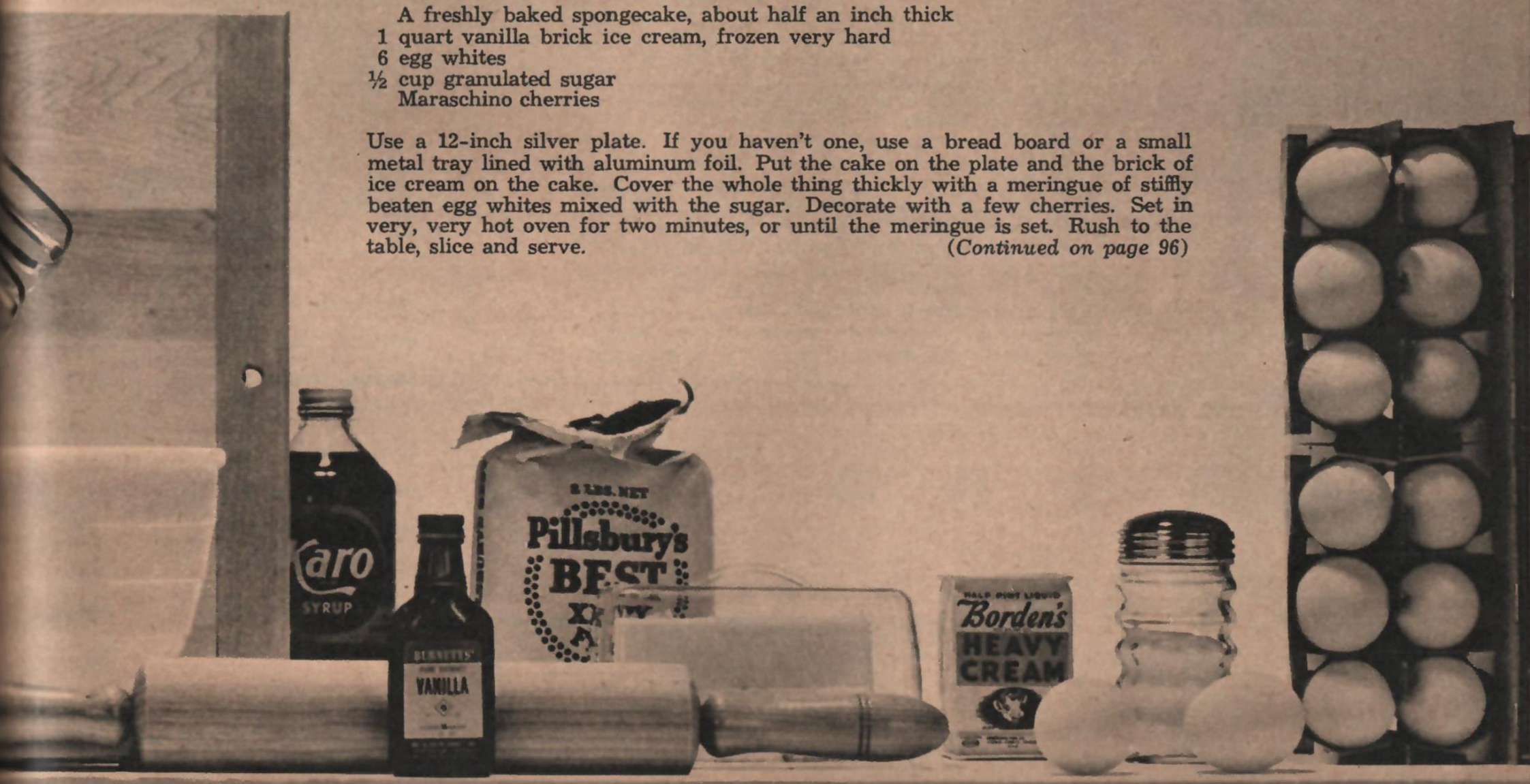
BAKED ALASKA

This is the dessert that was created to follow champagne and breast of guinea fowl under glass. Perhaps you think it's something that only a master chef can make. After all, ice cream baked in an oven! But it's easy. All you need is:

A freshly baked spongecake, about half an inch thick
1 quart vanilla brick ice cream, frozen very hard
6 egg whites
½ cup granulated sugar
Maraschino cherries

Use a 12-inch silver plate. If you haven't one, use a bread board or a small metal tray lined with aluminum foil. Put the cake on the plate and the brick of ice cream on the cake. Cover the whole thing thickly with a meringue of stiffly beaten egg whites mixed with the sugar. Decorate with a few cherries. Set in very, very hot oven for two minutes, or until the meringue is set. Rush to the table, slice and serve.

(Continued on page 96)



HOMEMADE OR HANDMADE

Professional cutting and fitting tricks will make your home sewing equal the best in Main Street's shop windows

BY LILLIE STUCKEY

■ RECENTLY the manager of a small sewing machine shop reported that a woman stormed into his store with fire in her eyes and three dresses under her arm. "Look at these rags!" she cried. "All last year I saved money until I had enough to buy one of your sewing machines. I have three little girls and I thought we'd all be decently dressed. But we're not; the clothes I make look perfectly terrible, worse than I used to buy in bargain basements. My oldest child says she won't wear any more homemade clothes. What am I going to do?"

No one should have to wear "homemade" clothes. The very word conjures up a picture of a skimpily-cut, clumsily-sewed, awkwardly-hanging dress that no girl of three or twenty-three would want to wear to a dog fight. Handmade or custom-made is the word you want to use. It implies the use of quality fabric, a design individually adapted to the wearer, delicate stitches, flawless fit.

If your sewing machine isn't turning out clothes that hint of fashionable shop windows, don't blame the machine. Don't blame the pattern, either, or the scissors or the fabric. You're the one who needs to learn a few professional tricks. They can make all the difference between a home-sewn wardrobe that looks like $500 and one that looks like a nickel's worth of nothing.

What's your hurry? Sewing, like cooking or carpentry, is first-cousin to the fine arts. It can't be accomplished with a hot needle and a burning thread. Don't sit down to sew unless you are assured of at least half an hour of uninterrupted work.

Don't skimp. You bought the best sewing machine you could possibly afford. Now give it the care and the help it deserves. Keep it covered or dust it daily. Oil it as directed. Call a repairman promptly whenever it bucks, kicks or develops strange rattles. Buy good equipment: a pair of fine, sharp scissors; pinking shears; (*Continued on page 96*)

PATERNITY RAP (*Continued from page 64*) depression struck. I know it didn't come overnight but it seemed that way. One moment everyone was talking about high prices, making more money, enlarging businesses, taking trips, sending their daughters to dancing schools and their sons to costly camps. The next moment their businesses were being wiped out. The lines formed in front of the employment windows and though people stood longingly in front of "John Renton, Furniture," no one had the money to go in and buy.

I was the only one in Westmont who didn't worry. I dismissed everything with one grand statement when I watched John pore over his account books: "The last thing Papa said about you before he died was that you could never fail. I just can't worry with a husband like you."

John looked up at me through weary eyes.

"You'll juggle those accounts around some way," I laughed easily. Then I went on trimming my hat with pink flowers for spring and started Elsie's new party dress with the four yards of organdy I had charged to John at the dry goods shop.

"Dr. Galvin says you should take it easy," I said to him. "I can't imagine your taking life easy, John, any more than I can see you rip-roaring drunk."

"Maybe I should get drunk," he said and I noticed a lining of doubt in his voice.

"You drunk! Oh, no! Not you, the paragon of virtue."

I don't know why he didn't slap my face but he only put his arm around me. "It's a lot of faith you and your father have put in me, Amy," he said. "I guess I wear a good reputation as constantly as poor Nan Welsh used to wear her bad one."

The name nudged against an old sore spot. "Whatever happened to that girl?" I asked.

"She and her husband have a roadhouse just outside of the county," he told me.

I smiled scornfully. "I can't imagine your knowing the location of a roadhouse. Why don't you go there sometime?"

John didn't answer me and we went on with our busy ways. I was entrenched with the problems of my children, with Elsie's difficulty with history, with Ken's winning basketball team. We were a respectable family and I was the good wife, a member of four clubs, a member of the church.

Where do the years of a marriage go? They are wished away waiting for something that's coming next week: new paint for the kitchen or new rugs for the living room. They add up quickly, maybe to a brick house built on a better street, a daughter whispering secrets to the neighbor boy and a son wanting to be a mining engineer. They add up to a respectable pattern of small words, a placid kiss, a pot of coffee brewed to the same strength every morning.

Then one day John came home and crumpled up on the floor. The sun was suddenly blotted out of my sky. When Dr. Galvin finally stood over him, I heard the whisper of the electric clock, a sound I'd never noticed before. Then the doctor looked up at me. "John's going to be all right, Amy. He had me scared for a moment but it isn't his heart. I guess it's nerves and fatigue, almost losing his business, the worry."

"He never told me about losing the business," I gasped.

"I guess he didn't want to worry you," Dr. Galvin said, "but the business is safe now."

When John was getting better, the doctor said, "You know, fellow, according to the insurance statistics you have just about seven more years to kick up your heels

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ACCEPTED COUNCIL ON FOODS AND NUTRITION AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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and have fun. Better make up for lost time and crowd a lot in them."

"Seven more years!" John's face looked drawn. "Maybe I should!"

When he went out the first time he bought a new suit, and the cut and the cloth didn't look like John Renton, conservative and proper businessman. He phoned often that he would be late, and I began to look in the mirror, searching out my own wrinkles and signs of age just like the advertisements reminded women to do around the fifty mark.

Then the world crashed around my ears.

The rest of the town knew it before I did. They didn't voice their opinions out loud; they didn't need to. They said it with their eyes, their averted faces, the whispered murmur when we went to church or any public place. It didn't matter. The shock had left me so numb I couldn't hear their comments or see the expressions on their faces.

John Renton, Westmont's most respected businessman, was being named in a paternity suit. The girl worked as a waitress in Nan Welsh's roadhouse, where John had been spending all his spare time. The girl claimed she had been taken to a vacation cabin one week end.

I looked at John only once after I knew. The wall was there between us. I could say nothing, just turn away.

■ NAN WELSH came up my straight concrete walk leading to my strong brick house in the better section of town. Her black hair was silver streaked and her eyes were intense dark pools.

"I thought you would like to know that John is innocent of the charge that girl is making," she said. "I'm going to testify. I have proof that she's lying."

I leaned forward hopefully. If he were really innocent of this!

"He couldn't have taken that girl away as she accuses him," she went on. "She just wants money. You see, John spent that time with me."

I tried to stand up but I was too shaken with fury. "I'm quite through with John Renton," I said. "You can have him now."

Nan looked at me, matching my anger. "Why shouldn't John and I be the best of friends?" she said cuttingly. "I had a bad reputation that made it hard for me to live in this town and John had a reputation that was too good. It's hard being perfect. Why don't you try it sometime?"

She was gone. I sat at John's desk and buried my bursting head in my hands. He'd needed my sympathy and comfort and help, and I never gave it. No man is like a rock or a band of steel. When he was worried I only teased him about his noble character. No wonder he'd turned to Nan. . . .

I hardly heard Nan's testimony or the murmur of the curious crowd in the courtroom. Someone had to tell me that the case was dismissed. I walked out of the building and stumbled blindly away.

Suddenly Charlotte Morton, who had been a bridesmaid at what I'd always called my "shotgun wedding," was propping me up by the elbow. "It's too bad to find out this late about the real character of a man," she said in harsh judgment, "but you can make a new life. Forget him."

I spun around. "Maybe we can *both* make a new life!" I cried out, hysterically pushing back through the crowd to find John and beg him to come home. *The End*

CABIN DATE (*Continued from page 35*)

I kissed her goodbye was, "Be careful, Vi," and I knew she didn't exactly mean about swimming or sailing.

If she could see Greg now, I thought, *whistling and striding up the path to the cottage from the gate, a bag in either hand, she would think him the nicest, most natural and straightforward person that had ever taken me anywhere.*

He grinned at me over his shoulder. "Onward and upward," he said. "It won't be long now."

The path was quite steep, winding up between roots and rocks to the level where the cabin stood. "Oh, isn't this heavenly!" I said. It was long and low and all windows, looking down over a lake incredibly blue. Above and around were hills and more hills, and the air was full of sweet, sprucy smells.

"Sniff hard," Greg said. "You'll want to take half a dozen lung-loads of this with you." He set the bags down and reached in his pocket for the key. It was scarcely in the lock before we heard the shrill sound of the phone inside. "Can you beat that?" he exclaimed. "There ought to be a law against telephones ringing before you've assembled yourself."

I perched on the edge of the veranda, drinking in the view, hearing the rumbling of his voice inside.

"That was Claire," he said, coming out. "The garage has ratted on them. No car. She says they'll get the two o'clock train. Gets up here at five."

"Oh." I looked down for fear he would see how pleased I was over that extra hour added so unexpectedly to the ones I already cherished.

"She also says," he went on, "that we can go down on their bikes and help with the shopping when the train comes in. How's about a swim now?"

I jumped up. "Let's go," I said. "Show me my room and I'll race you out to that float."

"It's a deal," he said. "Snappy's the word."

I worked fast but he was faster. He raced down to the boathouse three yards ahead of me and dove into the water with a clean, soaring motion.

The water flowed along my arms and legs as soft as silk. Greg had already climbed on the float when I got there and he leaned over, one hand outstretched. His laughing face, only a few inches above my own, shut out everything else. "Come on up, if you can," he gibed. At that, he deliberately tilted the float, throwing me off balance, and I sprawled back into the water again, legs and arms thrashing. He jumped in too and we fooled like that, as if we were kids, until we were out of breath. Then we flung ourselves on the bleached boards of the float to toast ourselves in the sun.

Greg lay flat on his back, shading his eyes with his hands. I was on my stomach, pillowing my head on crooked elbows, utterly content.

After a minute he said drowsily, "Who cares about ambition? Give me this."

"It's like being on a desert island," I said. "And not a sail in sight."

The float lurched as he rolled over on his side and cocked an eye at me. "Well, who wants to be rescued? Do you?"

Laziness slurred the syllables, but my heart gave a succession of quick thumps. "Do *you?*" I returned, trying to make my voice sound as languid as his.

"What do you think?" he drawled. He leaned nearer to run a finger from my forehead to my throat. For minutes afterward I felt the tingling line of it. "Did anyone ever tell you that you have a lovely profile?"

"Not until now," I said.

He sat up, laughing. "Most girls I've known would have come back with the snappy reply that they were tired of hearing it."

"I would if I had thought of it," I admitted.

That made him laugh again. I laughed with him, and recovered my balance a bit. If only this *were* a desert island! If only time would stand still and let this moment last! But the shadows were lengthening, a chill breeze had come up. It was time to get back to the cabin.

"That five o'clock train can't be more than thirty or forty miles away," Greg said reluctantly. "We'll have to tear ourselves out by the roots."

■ WE DRESSED, got the bicycles out and started for the station, Greg coasting down the highway ahead of me. "Watch out," he called. "A big bump here."

I braked my swift flight while he slowed down to wait for me in a hollow where there was a tumble-down shack of a cottage, right at the weedy end of the lake. Absorbed in avoiding the bump, I was only partially conscious of noisy, scuffling figures on the veranda. Then I heard a voice calling, "Hi there, Vi Collett!"

One of the figures disengaged itself to wave at me. It was Leila Potts.

"You grabbing yourself a week end too?" she went on shrilly.

I was embarrassed. Leila had been in my grade at school but I'd avoided her ever since. People called her "that Potts girl," and mothers of sons went cold if their boys so much as looked toward her.

"Who's your friend?" Greg asked.

I told him, but I was still squirming inwardly at the implication of her remark. It seemed to leave a slight smudge on the time I had had with Greg. . . .

The train was in and the passengers were getting off in ones and twos and threes. Luggage, boxes of supplies, golf bags, baskets of fruit, piled up on the platform. The last trickle of people died away. The train groaned and snorted and went on up the grade, and Greg and I looked at each other in dismay.

"They couldn't have made it," he said.

"Now what do we do?" I asked, an uncomfortable, gnawing feeling beginning behind my ribs.

He looked into space for a moment. "There's a chance, of course, that the garage kicked through after all and they didn't take time to phone us."

"We'd never have heard the bell if they did," I said. "We must have been out on the lake for two hours anyway."

"That's right. Let's see." He wrinkled his forehead and made calculations. "Suppose they did. That would mean they'd left somewhere about, or later than, train time. That would bring them up here about seven or eight." His eyes came from the distance back to me. "Looks as if we'll have to amuse ourselves for a couple of hours longer than was in the contract."

"Do you mind?" I asked.

His eyes suddenly glowed.

"Mind! It's a reprieve."

We stood staring at each other for a moment that for me at least was filled with music. There was more than good comradeship in that look of his, in the deepened tones of his voice. He wasn't just doing his duty by a guest. These few hours meant something to him too. So we stood, and if he had made one move toward me I wouldn't have cared whether we were on the station platform or not. Finally he said, "You name it, and we'll do it."

In an effort to bring myself back to nor-

mal, the only thing I could think of to say was: "Let's eat."

He threw back his head and roared with laughter. "What a woman! All right, we eat. Where?"

There were any number of places—a diner, a snack bar, a couple of hotels—but they seemed to lack the atmosphere of festivity we wanted now. We got our bicycles and stood leaning on them while we discussed possibilities.

"I have it," Greg said finally. "Can you cook?"

"Yes," I said. "Oh, wouldn't that be fun!"

We bought the food in the chain store on the main street. Greg had such lavish ideas of what was needed for a meal for two that we would never have been able to carry the stuff in the wire baskets of the bicycles if I had let him have his way, but he did insist on getting a tin of anchovies just because I said as we passed the shelf that I liked them and I bought him a jar of maraschino cherries because he said that when he was a kid he always thought he'd like to eat a whole jar of them.

■ WE HAD our dinner, picnic style, down at the lake. Greg got the outdoor grill going while I assembled the salad. Soon the good sizzling sound of steak and the appetizing aroma of coffee curled around on the warm still air.

"I begin to believe," Greg said, as we stacked the dishes and took our coffee away from the smoke of the fire, "that this twosome business has something after all."

"I wouldn't know," I replied, "but I've heard rumors."

"Such as falling in love at first sight? Being made for each other? Beautiful myths like that?"

"Why do you call them myths?"

Even my own voice sounded low and musical to me. There was a growing enchantment about this hour in a golden evening, with only an interested squirrel looking on. The slanting rays of the sun touched the tree trunks with red and the grass with a strangely vivid green. Where the shadows crept forward on the lawn there was a smell of dew. *If only this could last,* I thought. Soon now we would hear the sound of the car on the road below, and this idyllic moment would be gone forever. I must cherish it while I still had it.

"I *used* to call them myths," Greg said, "until—oh, damn!"

The telephone jangled across the delicacy of the moment. Greg went in to answer it. He came back, an odd look on his face. "That was Claire. Our guesses were partly right. The garage called when they were ready to get the train that they would have the car fixed by three. Bill did try to get us while we were out on the lake. Then the garage called again to say that they wouldn't be able to finish the job after all until Monday. Claire's still on the line. She'd like to speak to you."

In complete confusion and dismay I went in to the telephone.

"Vi, darling," Claire said, "I'm frightfully sorry. Bill's ready to plant a time bomb in the garage, to go off after we get the car back, of course. But we'll get the early train up tomorrow morning. You'll be able to manage until then, won't you?"

"Oh, yes. We'll manage." My brain was whirling.

"Well, goodbye, darling. See you tomorrow."

I hung up and walked slowly out to where Greg was pacing up and down.

He threw down a half-smoked cigarette and stepped on it. "We might as well finish our coffee."

But the pattern was broken. It was silly of me, I knew, to feel upset, but I did. The gaiety seemed to have gone from our meal. A faint breeze stirred the treetops, and as if it had been a signal, the sun perceptibly dipped down. Involuntarily I shivered.

Greg was quick to notice it. "You mustn't be cold," he said. Then, without moving, he kissed me. "Vi! Vi, darling!"

"Oh Greg!"

All at once his arms were crushing me, his lips hungrily on mine, mine hungrily on his. When finally we came back to reality I was limp and trembling.

"Now you know," he said. "Ever since that evening your dear, solemn, little-girl face looked at me and said, 'I've heard so much about you,' I've been in love with you."

"I stopped calling it a myth that night too," I said.

He kissed me again, but gently this time. "I'm glad now that Claire and Bill aren't coming until tomorrow. I'd have begrudged every minute that had to be mortgaged to politeness."

"We'll have to waste some of them," I said regretfully, "seeing about a room for me at the hotel before it's too late."

He got to his feet. "It's a darn shame you have to go down and stew in a stuffy room."

"I haven't much choice, have I? Unless *you* go down and stew. Then I'd have to stay here alone."

He made a restless movement, away a few paces, then back again. The uncertain light made it difficult to read his face. Silence held us for a moment. Its tenseness ought to have prepared me for what he said: "Why should either of us stay here alone?"

"Greg, do you know what you're saying?"

"Of course I know what I'm saying." He slipped down beside me. "Look at me. Do you think it's wrong of me not to want to let you out of my sight?"

"No."

He put his arm around my shoulder and I leaned against him. No, it wasn't wrong. I was utterly silly to act as if he had insulted me.

He laid his cheek against my hair. "We've been alone here for hours, haven't we? Well, then, do you think people are going to put the worst possible construction on that?"

"Why, of course not," I said. "After all, it was broad daylight."

"What's the difference between broad daylight and night? It depends on the kind of mind you have, doesn't it?"

I had to think hard about that one. Finally I said, "Only partly. In the end, it comes down to—to us."

"All right," he argued. "What about us? Don't you think it's perfectly reasonable and possible for two people to stay a night under the same roof, in the same rooms they would occupy if their host and hostess were there?"

"Theoretically, yes," I had to admit. But there were more powerful things than theory, more powerful even than convention and public opinion. Those were the things I knew now that I had to reckon with.

Greg drew me closer to him. "It would be the very dickens for one of us to have to go and leave the other one alone. Look at the stars; they're clean and bright and honest. We could stay right here under the stars like this."

I relaxed against him. As long as I had life I would remember this, the warmth of his arms around me, the feel of his breath on my cheek, the sound of the dark water lapping on the shore. I would never forget this whole wonderful day, the afternoon in the sunshine, the growing realization that Greg cared, that lovely, free flight down the hill on the bicycles, the way Greg watched over me, warning me about even the bump in the road.

That bump in the road—and Leila Potts calling out to me.

Greg gave me a little shake. "What about it?"

I took a deep breath. I knew now how I was going to answer that question, but I didn't know exactly how I was going to phrase it so that Greg would understand.

"It's just this, Greg. If—if I stay, what difference would there be between me and—and Leila Potts, down the road? As far as the world is concerned, I mean?"

I could feel him stiffen.

"Don't you see, Greg? It's terribly important really. She's here for a week end with someone that, for the moment, is the only one in the world for her."

"Baloney!" he said roughly. "There's all the difference in the world."

"But it's only on the outside, Greg. She's in a shack at the weedy end of the lake instead of up on the heights. She and her friends are noisier than we are, and cheap. And our kind of people are sniffy about Leila's kind and shrug our shoulders and say, 'What can you expect? She hasn't had any advantages.' But if we've had more advantages than Leila we ought to be different, shouldn't we? Perhaps she started out, once, with a week end that was all right to begin with, but—"

"So you don't trust me."

How could I tell him that I couldn't even trust myself? His arm slid away from around me and I felt cold and alone. If he couldn't see. . . .

"Well," he said, "if that's the way you feel about it, I'll see you along into the village. Better get your things."

He strode ahead of me up to the cabin and when I came out with my overnight case he took it from me and turned on his flashlight to show me the way down the path. We didn't speak. *It shouldn't be so hard,* I thought miserably, *to do what you think is right.* I couldn't bear Greg's not seeing it, not knowing how hard it was. It made him, somehow, less than I thought he was. "Greg," I said despairingly, "please listen. I've always felt that when the right person came along I'd like to be—I'd like to—to give him as perfect a gift of myself as I could, and I'd like to think that he felt the same." A hard lump in my throat choked me off.

"Is that all?"

"Only that I thought you were the right person."

"And I'm not?" He set the bag down and turned the flashlight full on my face. I blinked and turned away. Then, just as blinding a realization came to me. I turned back and smiled straight into the light. "You're the only one, Greg, who can tell me whether you are or not," I said.

His voice came to me from behind the glare. "No man," he said unsteadily, "could ever be good enough. If there were more girls like you, more of us would get somewhere near it." The light wavered and a second later the flashlight was rolling on the ground but he stood without touching me. "I want you to believe that all I thought of was hating to have you go because I love you so much that not seeing you is like not living. You do believe that, don't you?"

I pulled his arms around me. "What else could I believe?" I said.

Time fled past us unheeded while we lost ourselves in each other again. Finally Greg said huskily, "That's for goodnight. See you in the morning, Vi darling." He retrieved the flashlight and picked up my bag. With his free arm around me, he matched his steps to mine as we started along the road to the village. *The End*

INSURANCE FOR OUR FAMILY (*Continued from page 67*) insurance.

You can't ignore the possibilities of group insurance, either, if you have the opportunity of taking it out. You are lucky if you still have your G.I. insurance, the lowest priced policy there is. We let ours lapse because we had the other policy and felt it unnecessary to carry both. Now I'm all for having our breadwinner reinstated and getting it back as a means of insuring our many sons' and one daughter's education.

Insurance of this type is of course much less expensive than the ordinary endowment policy, which we ordinarily think of when we consider the college days coming up for our youngsters. If the children's father is still hale and hearty and earning, he will presumably have his house and car and furniture paid for by that time and can get the cash surrender value out of this policy, which has given his family extra protection all these years, and keep on paying the bills in person.

Endowment policies are fine, an insurance man told me the other day, if you have the money to pay for them, but until you have that kind of money it is better to make it a rule never to insure anything but an asset; in other words, insure only the person on whom you are dependent for an income.

There are some other types of insurance that we need and have, for the most part. We have hospitalization, which gave us enormous comfort when David broke his arm, when Alan swallowed his nail.

We also have surgical insurance which will eventually give us back some of the coin we spend on tonsil, adenoid and hernia operations. It will pay part of the doctor's bill when the next baby comes. It first paid off a month ago when Daddy was baby-sitting while I went to the dentist. A cupboard door fell on Alan's toe and six stitches were called for at a cost of nearly five dollars per stitch. Upon hastily consulting my little paper I found that most of the doctor's bill could be taken care of.

There is fire and storm insurance on the house, of course. This you are required to have by the outfit which clutches your mortgage, and the payments, like taxes, are included in your monthly payments on the house.

There is also fire and theft insurance on our personal property. This is something everyone should have, I think. It dawned on us that, meager though our possessions seemed to us, it would take a couple of thousand dollars to begin to replace things: vacuum cleaner, typewriter, clothes, rugs, books, phonograph, linens.

There is property damage insurance on the secondhand car now blessing our garage which heretofore has only housed bicycles, scooters, wagons, strollers and the baby carriage. It means that when I smash up someone else's car I don't have to worry about fixing up their car, just our own. More insurance would be good, but we can't afford it.

Last, but not least, is the comprehensive liability insurance policy we have which covers any accidents to people while they are on our property. This is because of the dozens of children who perform dangerous stunts on the trapeze, walk the fences, climb on the wood pile and fight like cats and dogs with blunt weapons or anything else at hand. Nothing's happened yet, but it can't go on forever. This is one policy we wouldn't dare let go. Tomorrow is Saturday and thirty young ones between eighteen months and seven years of age can be expected to turn up for a free-for-all. Do you see what I mean? Bless that comprehensive liability! *The End*

MY SECOND CHILD BY NATURAL CHILDBIRTH (*Continued from page 73*) But natural childbirth has even less to do with conventional obstetrics as it is practised today. Now, in most hospitals, drugs and gas are used to dull the last few hours of extreme suffering. But at what a price! There is no anesthetic that is ideal for use in childbirth. Some halt the natural forces of labor, so that the forceps delivery has become routine. Forceps injuries to infant eyes, ears and skull are still too often recorded. Others decrease the oxygen supply in the mother's blood so that the child, during birth, sometimes suffers serious brain damage. Some evidence is being offered that the big jump in cerebral palsy cases noted in the last twenty years may be partly due to reckless use of anesthetics in childbirth.

The final argument against unnecessary anesthesia in childbirth is the fact that it robs many a woman of the full sense of being a mother.

The birth of my first child was not abnormal in any way. As a matter of fact it was a comparatively quick job. Yet I remember it as a miserable experience which left me feeling royally cheated on all counts.

There was pain. You who are mothers know all about it. Before the hasty injection of twilight sleep and the final, terrifying descent of the ether mask there were hours of slowly growing agony. No reputable obstetrician will administer drugs until the final stage of hard labor has been reached. He knows too well the dangers of pain relief.

I woke up on the delivery table just in time to see the heated bassinet that held my first-born child roll out of the delivery room, headed for the nursery.

"You had a little girl, Mrs. Robbins," I heard my doctor say. "Did you know?"

I moved my head numbly. "No," I muttered, "I didn't know anything about it." I saw my doctor smile triumphantly. One of the interns shook his hand and told him he was wonderful. By their distorted standards I suppose he was.

I didn't see my daughter for nearly twenty-four hours. Hospital regulations. This piece of sheer inhumanity still rouses me to rage every time I think about it. I came out of the hospital saying, "Something must be done."

Something was already being done. In England a famous doctor was risking his prestige and practice by publishing a revolutionary book called, "Childbirth Without Fear." (Harper & Bros., 49 East 33rd Street, New York 16, N. Y. $2.75) His name was Grantly Dick Read. And in this country, in New York City, a number of wonderful and blessed women who head an organization known as The Maternity Center of New York read his book and invited him over here to lecture.

He came. His reception was not altogether friendly. He was called a hypnotist, a crackpot. But there were some who listened. The nurse-midwives of The Maternity Center were interested. The obstetrical staff of the Yale University Clinic decided to give it a try. So did an obscure country doctor in Toms River, New Jersey. To them, Dr. Read's ideas made sense.

Childbirth is a normal function, he told them. It has no business being associated with pain. Pain is nature's signal that there is something wrong. We should expect to find a broken bone, a ruptured appendix or an attack of indigestion, but not a baby.

We do know, however, that fear can create severe pain even when there is no reason for it. We have all seen strong men and women turn white before a hypodermic needle breaks the skin. Dentists see patients who squirm and groan while the drill is still whirling in the air. If you make up your mind that you are going to suffer, you will.

Now, what effect does fear of pain have on a woman in labor? Plenty! If she is sufficiently terrified she can prolong the birth of her child for hours. Some hysterical women have brought perfectly normal birth to a dead halt for as long as two or three days, and suffered terribly.

You have been told all your life that childbirth hurts. You've seen it in the movies, you've read about it in books, you've overheard it in the whispers of your mother and your older friends. Always the woman is in exquisite agony.

Doctors have not yet discovered the secret signal that sends you into labor. It is a message for a set of muscles that surround the cervix, the mouth of the uterus where your baby is lying. It says, "This baby is ready to be born. Get to work!" Their job is to open the cervix wide enough so that the baby can get through.

When labor begins, you feel the first muscular squeeze—a very gentle one—that means that the cervix is beginning to open.

Even if you are a fairly calm person, you probably get a bit panicky. You think, *This is it. This is a labor pain. It's going to get worse and worse.* You get ready to suffer. You grit your teeth, wrinkle your forehead, clench your hands into tight fists. You hurl your whole body into the fight to hold back that next squeeze. And when it comes it really hurts.

This is why: with your terror and your tension you are bringing one set of muscles into play against another. Some muscles, operating under your body's command, are slowly and inevitably opening the cervix. You are forcing another set of muscles, under the command of your fear-stricken mind, to try to shut it up again. Of course the opening muscles will win; once it gets started nothing will keep that baby from being born. But you can certainly make the job tough for yourself if you try.

Why not just relax and let the cervix do its work without interference? Things will go along much faster. You'll be surprised to find that you'll hardly feel those labor pains. You may even put yourself to sleep. I did.

Go on, try it. Roll over on your side. Take the weight of your baby off your poor tired back and put it on the mattress, where it belongs. Let every muscle in your body go limp. Your arms and legs should go flip-flop like a rag doll's.

When the squeeze comes, don't fight it. Big, deep breaths that swell out your abdomen will help you stay relaxed. Count ten or twelve as you smoothly inhale and exhale. With practice, you can work up to twenty.

There now, that contraction is gone. It was quite a big one but you were so busy relaxing and counting and breathing you hardly noticed it come and go. It will work with the next squeeze, and the next. Thus you can pass quietly and calmly through the long hours of first stage labor.

With the cervix open, another kind of labor begins. Now your baby is ready to pass out of the uterus, through the vaginal canal, into the world. It's what is known as the bearing-down stage. It's hard work. The time for relaxing is past. How do you feel? Refreshed? Eager? Good.

Most women are either exhausted by hours of agony or dulled by drugs or both. They can't bring forth their babies without artificial help even if they want to. But you can.

You are on the delivery table now. If you aren't comfortable, say so. In a minute you are going to start the hardest work you will ever do in your life and you might as well get set for it. You will need something to pull against. Grasp the handles, if there are any, or hold the edge of the table or the hand of a nurse on either side.

When the bearing-down contractions begin, you will feel an irresistible urge to push. But let's do it right. Take a deep, quick chestful of air into your lungs, as though you were about to duck under water. Then, when the contraction is at its height, bear down. Push. Strain. And hold it until it's over. Then relax once more and wait for the next.

With this kind of cooperation from you, your baby will make quick progress. When the baby's head appears you must bring labor to a halt for just a moment. Take short, quick panting breaths, like a winded athlete. Your doctor needs time—time to get his rubber-gloved fingers around the little skull and guide it into the world. This is an exciting moment. It is also an extremely important moment for you. If you are smart and do as you're told, you may be able to avoid an operative delivery with its painful stitches that so often mean a crippling convalescence.

Now you are free to push again. Half a dozen good hard pushes and you know that the job is nearly finished. You breathe a long, relieved sigh which is drowned, at the end, by a thin, high squall. It is your baby's first cry.

■ YOU HAVE been going through a practice labor, the kind that hundreds of women at the Yale Clinic and The Maternity Center are learning in daily classes. If you'd like to form a natural childbirth class with other women under the guidance of your obstetrician or maternity clinic, or get further information about natural delivery, The Maternity Center, at 654 Madison Avenue, New York City, will send exercise charts and other helpful booklets on request.

The only aspect of a natural delivery for which no amount of rehearsal can prepare you is the way you will feel about it. Those are your own very private emotions. No two women ever describe it in exactly the same way. But most of us "natural" mothers agree that it's unbelievably wonderful. *The End*

DOES YOUR CHILD LIE? (*Continued from page 69*) go to the circus on Wednesday," makes a child feel like a person in his own right. He feels wanted and loved in the strongest sense.

How may parents distinguish between lying which is just a phase and the serious kind? If lying becomes chronic and if other disturbing symptoms like temper tantrums, depression or inability to get along with other children accompany the lying, the problem is too much for parents to handle alone.

Let us face the facts. Truth-telling is an acquired form of social behavior that children must learn, as they learn daily routine activities like bathing, dressing or school schedules. Moralizing and preaching by parents does little good. Nagging accomplishes even less. We must find the motive behind the lie and work intelligently and industriously to eliminate it wherever possible. *The End*

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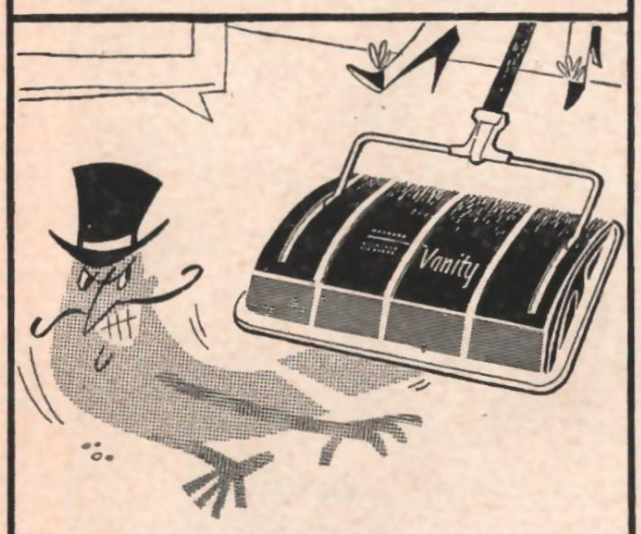

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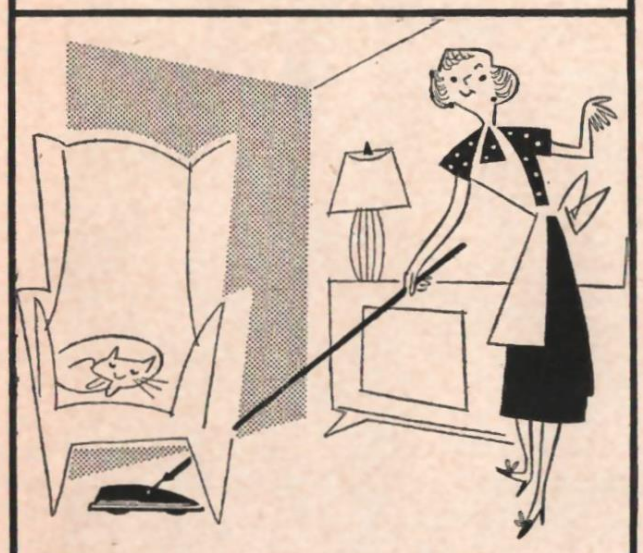

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I'M THROUGH WITH HATE (*Continued from page 33*) that could rise quickly above the troubles of her daily life. I was myself an imaginative boy. Once I said to Willie Swenson, "I'd like to jump up and ride around on one of those clouds. That one shaped like a boat. Then I'd float all around the world and pick out the place I liked best to live."

Willie gave me a hard, curious stare. "You must be batty," was his verdict.

Now, Emmy would have got on the cloud with me, and we'd have gone around the world.

When Christmas time came, Mom brought out the mail-order catalogues. We depended on them for almost everything. "I'm getting dolls for Ivy and Ida," she informed us.

"For *those* kids?" Dad said, his twinkling eyes watching the twins. They had tipped over four chairs, spread a blanket over them and crawled into their den. They were bears.

"It's time they learned to play right," Mom said.

Charlie, his feet propped against the nickel-plated footrest of the stove, raised an eyebrow in her direction. "You surmise, madam, that ladies are made, not born?"

She smiled ruefully. "I can try, can't I?"

I had a sudden idea. "Bet I know who *would* like a doll, Mom. Emmy Cane. Bet she's never had one."

And that's how it was that on Christmas Day I walked across the snowdrifts to our meeting place with a package under my arm.

Emmy was in the aspen grove, jumping up and down on a bare boulder. She had dreamed, she explained, that if you put feathers in your shoes you could bounce like a ball, so she had robbed her pillow of a handful of feathers and tried it. "But they don't bounce even a *little* bit," she sighed.

I held out the package. "It's from all of us," I said. "Open it up."

She laid back the wrapping and looked at the doll. It wasn't an expensive one. The brown hair was only painted on and the staring blue eyes didn't open and shut. But it was a baby doll, and Mom had dressed it in little flannel duds like a real baby would have.

Emmy stared at it, a hungry, longing look on her face. "She's beautiful, Davy. She looks just like you." But then the light went out of her face. "I can't take her home," she said dully. "My father would burn her. So you'd better take her back to your house. I wouldn't want her to get hurt."

"Well, then, look," I said. "I've got a tin cracker box at home. I'll get it right now and you can keep her in it here."

At home everyone wanted to know, "Well, did she like her doll?"

I looked around the room at my family. Over by the Christmas tree the twins had flipped their new wagon over, and, seated back to back in the middle of it, they were spinning the wheels with all their might. Dad was on the sofa watching them and wriggling his stockinged toes contentedly. Mom, Charlie and Christine were at the table breaking in a new deck of cards with a game of rummy. In that moment I felt a deep pity for Emmy and her empty home.

"She likes it a lot," I told them, "but I've got to give her my cracker box to keep it in. If she takes it home her dad will burn it."

Mom's mouth tightened and I saw her eyes meet Dad's.

Charlie threw his cards on the table with a slap. "I've got a good notion to go drag old Rock Face out of his den and spit in his eye!"

"Three cheers for you, Charlie," Christine applauded. "Why don't you?"

"Because I wouldn't know when to quit." He spread his hands helplessly. "I'd make gravel out of him."

■ WE KNEW it was spring when Mom's tulips burst into bloom. Dad had plowed a huge garden patch, and every other row was tulips. Mom was especially proud of one she'd developed herself, a snowy white with red in the center, like a flame in a cup. Every morning, before even she'd combed her long hair, she went to the window and looked out at the tulips, loving them.

Sometimes Emmy would be standing at the edge of the woods, staring toward the flowers. Once Mom called and asked her if she wouldn't like to pick some, but she turned away, as though she didn't hear. Lately unhappiness seemed to be growing in Emmy, crowding out everything else. She came less often to our meeting place, and then only sat quietly holding her doll.

One morning when Mom looked out the window, there was Emmy on her knees among the tulips, slashing them down with a knife.

"Oh, heavens," Mom moaned, rushing out the door. She grabbed Emmy by the arm, shaking her hard. Then Emmy looked up and Mom saw the misery in her eyes. She somehow managed to make her voice gentle. "Why have you spoiled my flowers?"

Tears began to sparkle in Emmy's eyes. "Because Mama can't see them. She can't ever see them. She's blind."

I had never told her secret. Mom's eyes met mine now, and I nodded. "That's right," I said.

Mom said to Emmy, "Get up off the ground, dear, before you catch cold."

She began gathering the cut tulips then, and Emmy and I helped her. When we had finished Mom said, "Now, I want you to take these to your mother. Perhaps she can't see them but she can feel them and smell spring in them."

Emmy backed away. "Oh, I can't do that, Mrs. Carpenter. My father would throw them away."

"Well, then," Mom snapped, "I'll take them to your mother myself!"

"Oh, please!" wailed Emmy, but Mom was already heading for the path that went to the mill. All Emmy and I could do was tag along.

Never will I forget the sight of Mom, her black hair looking blue in the early sunlight, her arms full of tulips.

Cane opened the door to us. Emmy, hands clenched at her sides, spoke up shrilly. "I couldn't stop her, Father. Honest."

Mom gave Cane a level look. "I've brought your wife some of my tulips."

"Thank you, Mrs. Carpenter," he said, "but my wife is blind. They will do her no good."

"I like my flowers even in the dark," Mom insisted. "May I come in, please?"

"My wife doesn't care for company," he answered stonily, not budging from the doorway.

"Then she has only to say so and I'll go," Mom said.

"I must ask you to leave at once." His words sounded like hammers driving nails.

Mom opened her blue eyes in pretended surprise. "Then I'm to understand your wife is a prisoner?"

For a long time they stared at one another. At last he stepped aside. "See for yourself."

As we walked into the big room my first impression was of bareness. There was a cookstove, cupboard, table and three chairs. No curtains at the windows.

The wood box was stacked with ragged ends of waste lumber. Towels hung drying on a cord. A small, three-legged table held a Bible, and the only decorations on the walls were proverbs, burned deep into the pine boards.

Even at my undiscerning age, I thought the verses were out of keeping with the spirit of a home.

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered." Prov. 28:26.

"Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house." Prov. 5:8.

"Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" Prov. 6:28.

In a rocking chair at the far corner of the room, Mrs. Cane sat rocking, staring at the wall. Her white hair was drawn back and knotted on her neck, but her face, that must once have been beautiful, was not old.

"Mrs. Cane," Mom said gently, "I'm your neighbor, Mrs. Carpenter. I've brought you some of my flowers."

Mrs. Cane stopped rocking and sat very still, one hand clutching at the sweater where it buttoned at her throat. "Flowers?"

"Yes. Tulips," Mom said. "Didn't Emmy tell you about the tulips?"

"Yes. Yes, she told me. Like a rainbow fallen on the ground, she said they looked." She held out her hand, and when Mom placed a tulip in it her fingers stroked it.

"Run, Emmy, and get some water to put these in," Mom directed. Then, while Cane stood by the door, his eyes hating us, she told Mrs. Cane about her white tulips, the twins and her house. Finally she said, "I must go now but I'll come again if you'd like me to."

Mrs. Cane held out her thin hand. "Thank you. Sometime I'll send Emmy to bring you. When Mr. Cane says I may."

My mother was too wise a woman to meddle but, at the gate, she turned to Cane and said quietly. "Thank you for letting me talk to your wife. I'll respect your wishes and keep your secret. Please let her enjoy the tulips; God made them just for that. And another thing: I wish you'd take that poker of yours and burn another verse on your wall . . . 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.'"

Cane did not reply, but we could feel his eyes following us as we walked away.

■ MAY BROUGHT an end to my schooling. I was a man now, ready to take my place among men. Christine bid us goodbye, not certain she would return in the fall.

"If you promise to send Charlie away, I'll come," she said to Mom. "I hate him to pieces. Either he goes or I stay away."

"I'll do my best to get rid of him," Mom promised.

"Well, how do you like that? They're black-beaning me," Charlie complained, but though it was all a joke, no one laughed.

I followed Charlie in the woods all that summer. He let me feel that I was making a hand, taught me to use an ax properly and to fell trees in exactly the chosen place. Then there was the work of trimming, and he kept me at it. "Learn to finish off the details," he told me. "I don't want you getting off on the wrong foot like I did. I was always tackling the tough end of a job, the technical part, and leaving the loose ends for some other guy to cope with. I'm learning a lot up here from these woods and from your dad. They're two of the best influences I've ever had."

Charlie had never forgotten anything,

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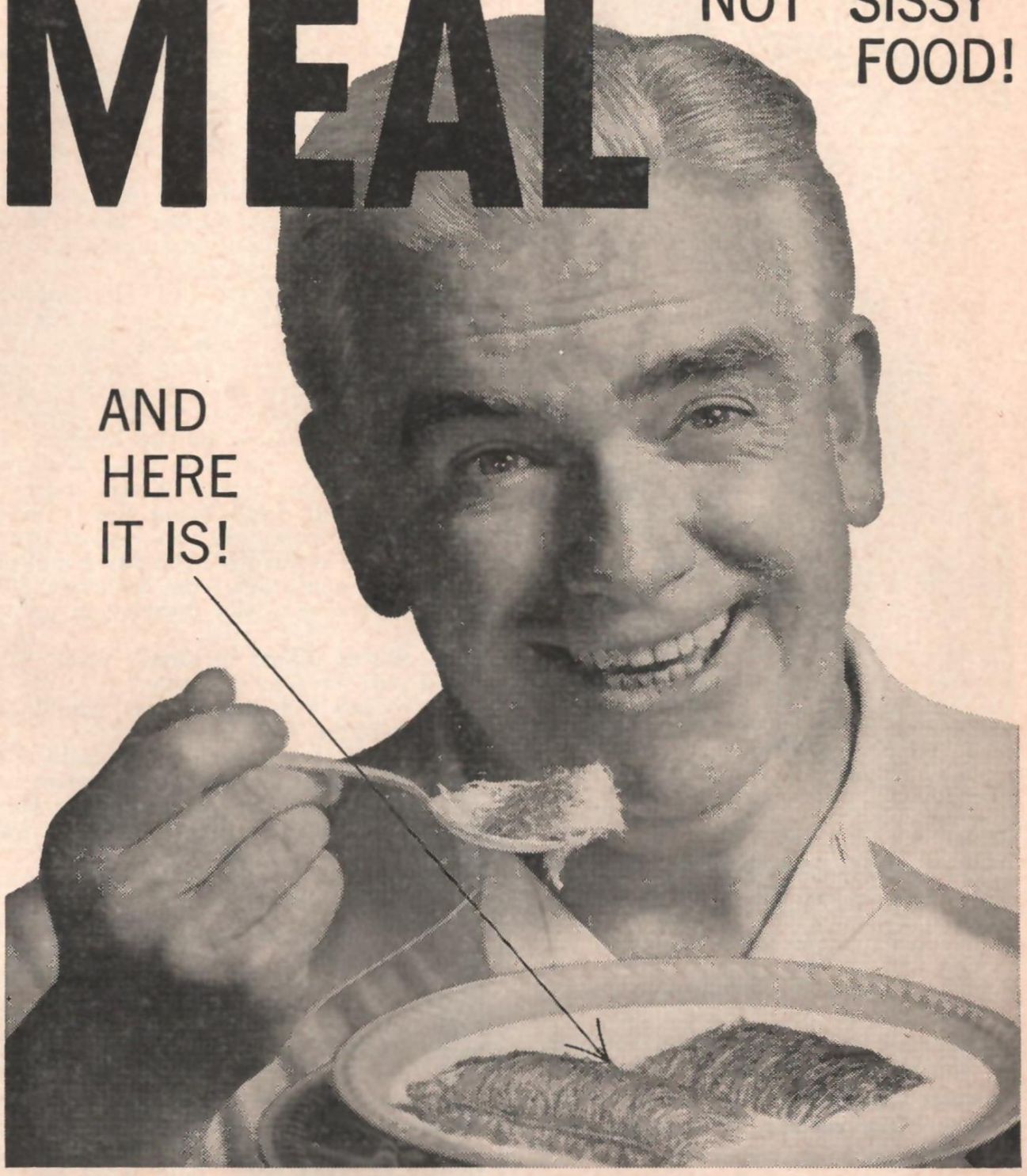

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and from the storehouse of his mind he brought wood lore, legends, names of trees and plants and birds, and gave them to me. We talked of everything under the sun, and he answered my questions about life and manhood with simple words.

He taught me to play the mouth harp. We sang together coming home from work. We shared jokes and problems and hard work. He was, perhaps, the brother I would never have. And then suddenly it was autumn, and an end to everything.

I caught the measles just before hunting season. I was furious. Me, a man, with a little old kid's disease!

The first few days I was too sick to fuss much, but I raised the roof when I began to feel better and Mom wouldn't let me get up.

"You'll stay right there," she insisted. "The measles won't hurt you if you don't catch cold."

The day before the season opened I was allowed to lie on the couch in the living room. The twins came and regarded me gravely.

"You've got the weasles," Ida told me.

"Your face is all red periods," Ivy said.

I picked up a book and threw it at them. They ducked and grinned. I guess I dozed off after that, because I didn't hear Charlie come in. First I knew, he was talking to Mom in the kitchen. "Do we have to go on like this, Margaret? Can't I tell Tom how it is and trust him to understand? Let's bring the truth out in the open where we can look it over. I never saw a woman till the day I met you. We loved each other from the start. Don't deny it. And it's been growing in us ever since."

There was defeat in Mom's voice. "Tom and I will have to go away."

"How can you think that would stop our love?" he demanded.

"Perhaps it wouldn't," she said, "but there are things more important than love. My marriage is one of them, my family another. I couldn't throw all of it away just to please a whim of the heart."

"So it's just a whim?" he said, his own heart in the words.

"Oh Charlie, no!" There was real anguish in Mom's cry. "Don't you know it's breaking my heart? But Tom is my husband and your friend. He loves us both, and trusts us. He might be willing to give up his happiness for ours but how could we let him?"

Charlie was silent a while, and when he spoke again I could almost hear his temper coming to a boil, like water in a tightly covered pot. "And what am I to do then? Sit around and wait for him to die?"

"Why don't you marry Christine? She'd make you forget me."

"For that I'd hate her. Besides, she's just a kid, fifteen years younger than I am. I'd get bored waiting for her to grow up." There was another long silence. "Maybe I'd better go away. You folks could stay on here and be happy, but I never could."

Long after he had gone I lay there with misery gnawing at me like a beaver at a tree, eating its way clear through as the full meaning of what I had heard bore in on me. *Leave here? Charlie go away?* Either thought was unbearable.

■ I HEARD Dad and Charlie leave next morning. Sulkily I turned my face to the wall and lay quiet. But though I pulled the covers tight around my head, I knew Mom was moving around in the kitchen making hot cakes and coffee for them. I knew the things they were saying, planning their hunt, and how their hands would touch their rifles, hefting them, feeling and testing the action, and stuffing their pockets with extra cartridges.

I knew too when Dad kissed Mom goodbye at the door. Charlie must have been standing by, perhaps pretending to study the sky for signs of what the day's weather would be. I felt sick and ashamed for him, and Mom too.

It was a gloomy day. The sun came out at intervals, turning the aspen leaves to gold. A fire danced in the fireplace, and the twins played about the yard, their new red stocking caps bobbing like apples in a tub. I had a new book, Robin Hood, but in spite of all this, my spirits refused to rise.

Mom was uneasy too. I could tell by the way she went at her work, like she was in a terrible hurry. Every so often she'd say, "Oh, dear," in a tired, hopeless voice, and once when we heard a distant shot she winced and said, "I wish your dad wasn't a hunter, Davy. I've always been afraid of guns. I hope they both get their game today and that'll be an end to it."

"Don't get excited, Mom. It's not so dangerous."

I sat by the big window all afternoon. It was dusk when I called to Mom, "Here they come!" Then I froze. That wasn't a buck Charlie was carrying; it was Dad.

Mom opened the door and I helped Charlie lay him on the couch. It wasn't until I touched his hand that I could believe he was dead. I'll never be able to wipe that scene from my mind: the twins, round-eyed, looking out from the bedroom door, their plump bodies buttoned into blue Teddy-bear pajamas; Mom kneeling by the couch, face hidden in her hands; Charlie.

"It was my bullet did it," he said dully. "How could I have thrown out that empty shell and cocked the hammer over a new cartridge and not remember anything about it? But I must have."

Mom said without raising her head, "Davy, get Charlie a cup of coffee."

I went out in the kitchen. The sight of the supper she had kept warm made me sick, but the coffee was ready, and I poured cups for both of them and carried them in to the table.

Charlie came over and sat down, staring at the coffee but not really seeing it. Mom sat down across from him. "Charlie." Her lips twisted. "Tell me how it was."

"We jumped a big buck about noon, up in the basin. We both took a shot at him, and one of us hit. He jumped out of sight behind the spruces and we ran up a steep trail, figuring it would put us in sight of him again. Tom was ahead. I stepped on some loose rock and fell on my knees. I guess my rifle butt hit the ground pretty hard. Anyway, it went off, and I saw Tom fall. But I never carry a loaded rifle. Even if I did get ready for a second shot when we jumped the buck, why can't I remember doing it?"

"It was an accident," Mom said. "You mustn't blame yourself. Davy, can you run and ask Mr. Swenson to come?"

They took Dad's body to Red Rock in the back of a truck. Charlie went along and the sheriff came back with him. The sheriff asked questions of the logging crews and the other West Creek residents. They all vouched for the good feeling between Dad and Charlie and said it was possible in the excitement of a hunt to throw a fresh shell into the magazine for another shot without thinking, and then when your target vanished you didn't even realize your gun was loaded. They'd all had similar experiences.

"How about you, son?" the sheriff asked me. "Ever know your dad and Charlie to have an argument?"

"No. They were friends." I said it grudgingly, but I couldn't blurt out before

those people that Charlie had wanted Dad out of the way. Not without blacking Mom, I couldn't.

"Well, I can't see any reason to hold an inquest here," the sheriff said. "Everybody seems satisfied it was an accident. A mighty regrettable one."

Our neighbors dug Dad's grave in the aspen grove where Emmy and I had played. We gathered there in the sunshine, Mom, the twins, Charlie and I and Dad's friends and neighbors.

While the travelling preacher prayed, Charlie's hand came to rest on my shoulder. I flinched it off. I could feel the hurt it gave him, and I was glad.

After the funeral I couldn't face any more. I bolted off up the creek, picked a warm hollow where the wind didn't strike and lay down. I wanted to sleep, but over and over in my mind ugly words made uglier pictures. *Charlie says it was an accident. How do you know he's telling the truth?*

I was feeling worse when I walked back to the house. Somehow, losing faith in my friend was hurting twice as bad as losing my dad. I slipped into the kitchen. I could hear voices in the living room, Mom's, Charlie's and the preacher's. I waited, not wanting to go in while the preacher was there.

"I heard of your trouble up here, Mrs. Carpenter," the preacher was saying, "and I thought I might be able to help. That's why I came, and now I'm tempted to stay."

Mom said, "Thank you, Reverend, for all you've done for us. I hope you do stay."

The preacher went out and Charlie said, "Margaret, there's lots we have to talk over."

"Oh, not tonight," she pleaded.

"Tonight," he said. "I've got to know how you're fixed for money, because I'm going away for a while."

"That's good," I said from the kitchen doorway. I glared at him, then turned to Mom. "He wanted to get rid of Dad and he did. You know what a temper he's got, and how he's always saying he doesn't dare get mad or he might kill somebody. Don't you know he just pulled a bead on Dad and shot him down?"

Charlie's face was white. "Davy, think what you're saying! You know I wouldn't shoot any man in the back!"

"I don't know anything!" I cried. I knew I should shut my mouth, but something sick and frantic was chasing around in my head, and the words came out in a rush. "It looked to me like you took aim. You hit Dad where I'd hit a man I wanted to drop dead without any fuss."

Mom crossed the room in a flash and grabbed me by the arm. "Davy," she said in a tone she'd never used with me before, "if you must have hysterics just scream or laugh or cry. Don't stand there saying things you'll regret all your life!"

Charlie said, "Dave, if what you said is what you really feel, it's just as well you got it out of your system. But now it's time you started thinking of your mother. All you've done since this happened is sit and think. Your mother has feelings too, but she has to go ahead with things. Now she's going to bed, and you make some tea and toast for her and put the twins to bed after you feed them." He was silent a moment, meeting my defiant gaze. Then he said, "If you won't take care of your family, I'll have to do it for you."

I turned my back on him and went to the cupboard to set out the supper things.

■ I MISSED Dad a thousand times a day, but it was Charlie the twins mourned for; they woke every morning wanting to know if "Umply," which was twin-talk for Charlie, had come home.

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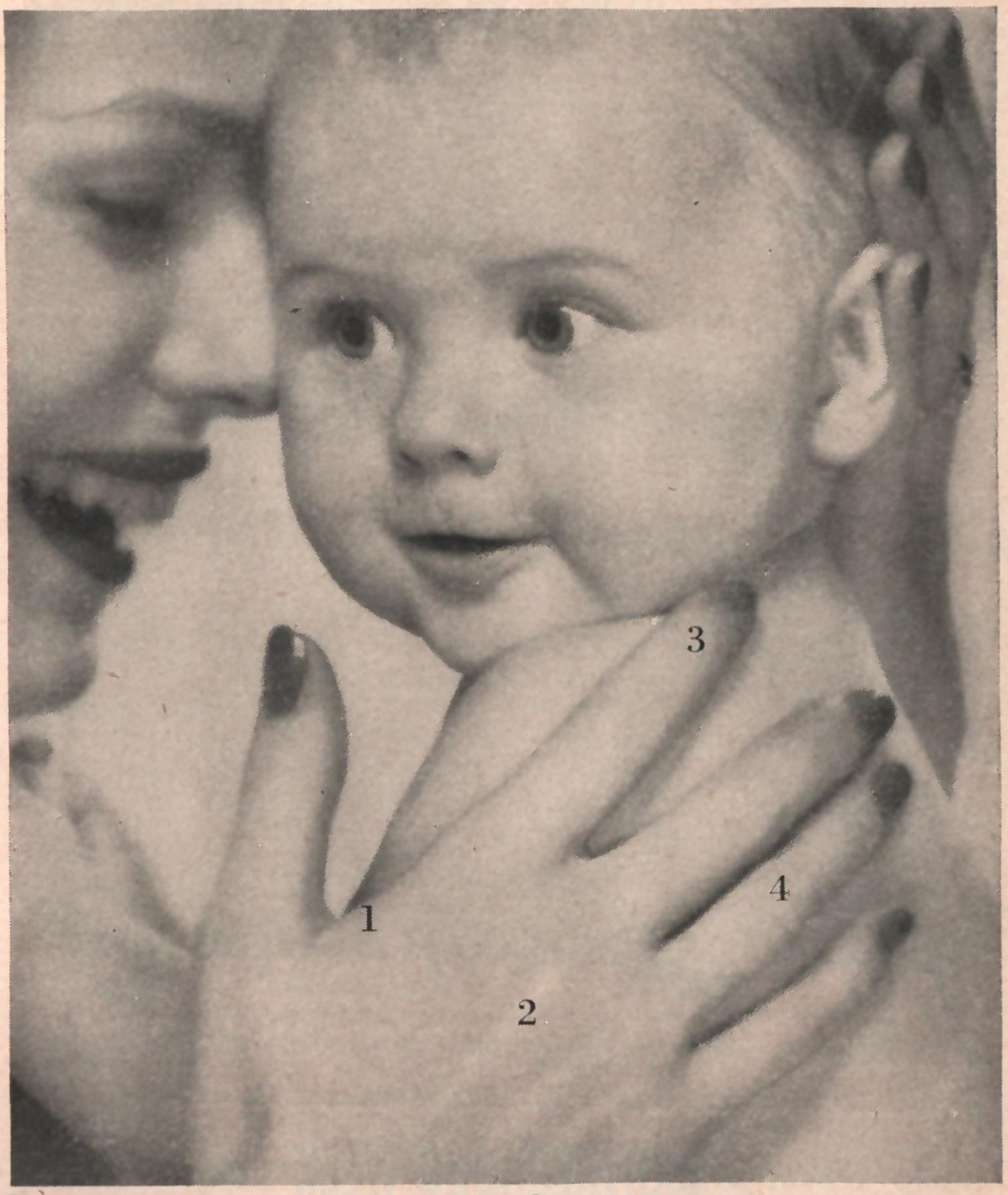

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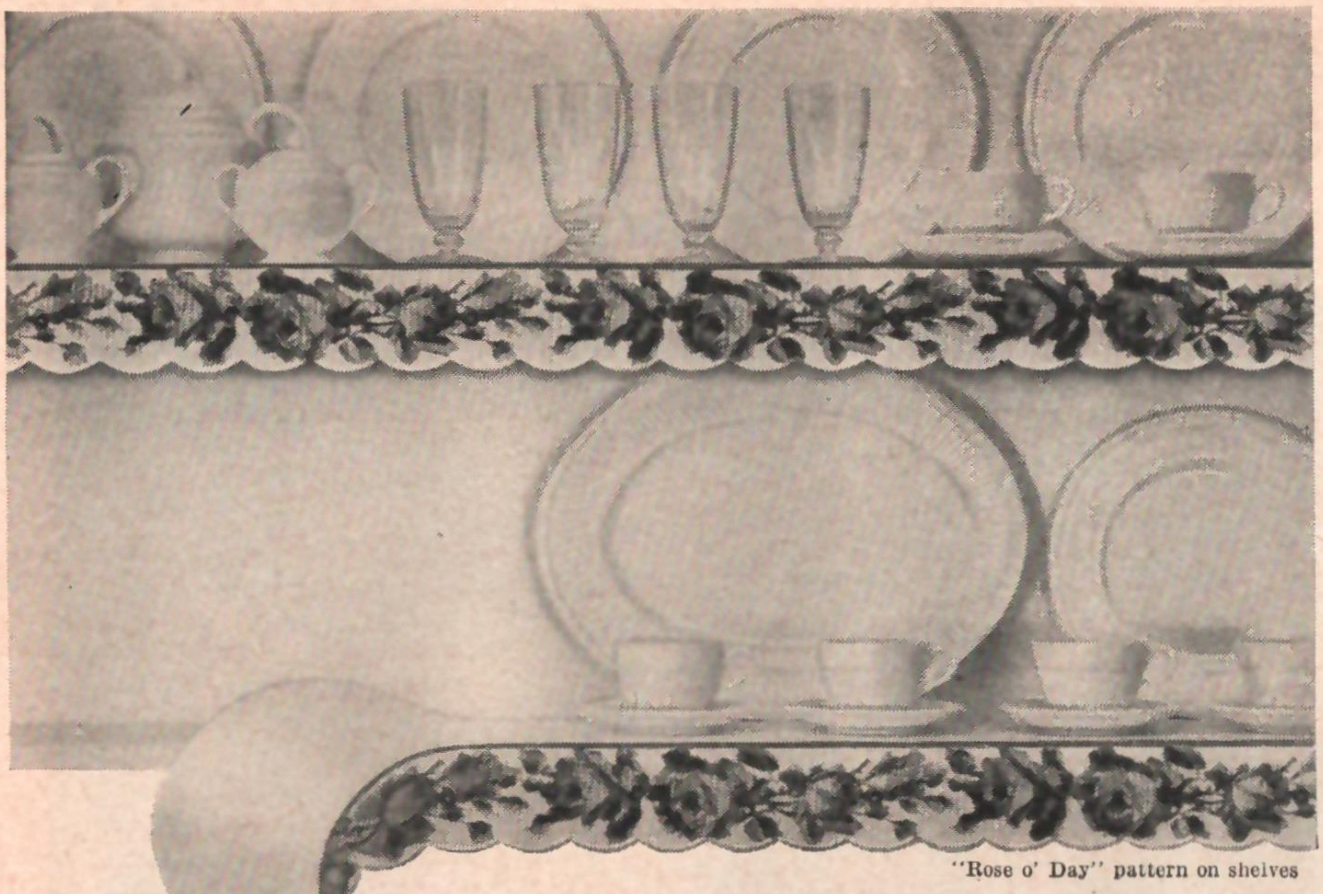

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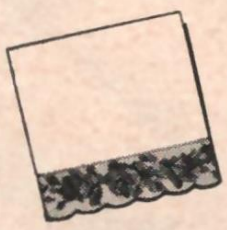

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Mom had time to take stock of our savings and look to the future. She decided that West Creek needed a café. Our town was growing every day, since Henry Daly was working a small silver diggings up Black Canyon and Bill Sales had unearthed what looked to be a good grade of asbestos not too far south of us in the Dog Creek country.

Mom bought a lot and the neighbors pitched in and built a good log building like they'd done for the school. Mom insisted on paying for the materials, but the men wouldn't take a cent for their work. They sure were swell. They even put a fence out back so the twins could play in the yard while Mom was busy.

Cane promised me part-time odd-job work at the mill. It looked like we'd make out okay. But I was beginning to feel the weight of responsibility that was settling on my shoulders. Mom couldn't carry the whole load.

The weather stayed fine, with no snow, and a week before Christmas Mom had the café ready to open. She called it "The White Tulip." I had spaded beds and bordered them with rocks and moved all her white tulip bulbs there. It would be a sight the next spring. Mom painted the window frames and door bright red and lettered on the door in white, "You Are Welcome."

Mom planned to open it on Monday. Sunday morning she decided I should keep the twins at home while she went down and took care of the last-minute details.

"You babies be good," she said to them. "It's almost time for Santa Claus to come and visit us."

Their eyes grew round.

"But Umply isn't here to get our Christmas tree," Ida said.

"Davy will get it," Mom promised, her face sad again. "Maybe he'll have time tomorrow."

When she had gone I bundled the twins into their coats and let them out. I made sure the gate was hooked, then went back to the house to read. Reading was my only escape nowadays.

From time to time I heard the twins talking at their play. Then, toward noon, I realized I had read quite a way since I'd heard them last. I got up and looked out the window.

The little red wagon was by the gate but the gate was open and the twins were gone.

My first thought was of the mad, crashing waters of West Creek. I ran there, calling, looking for tracks on the path and along the creek's edge. There were none. I made myself stand still and think. Where would they go? The café; they knew Mom was there.

I ran all the way. They weren't in the yard. I shoved open the door. "Mom! Are the twins here?"

She shook her head. "The creek?" she said through stiff lips.

"I looked there," I panted. "I couldn't see any tracks."

"Tell everybody you can find," she said. "Ask them to help us hunt. I'm going up into the woods."

Before long everyone in West Creek was there. Though we couldn't find tracks along the stream, word was taken down below to watch for their bodies in the creek.

About four o'clock a sudden breath of cold air touched our faces, and a haze moved between us and the sun.

"Oh my God," Mom whispered frantically. "It's going to snow!"

Mrs. Swenson had seated her big body on a fallen tree and was rubbing her stockinged feet. Her old shoes were beside her on the log. She said to Mom, "We're

going to have to leave this to the menfolks and get along back."

I looked up and saw Cane standing by a boulder. "You're right, Mrs. Swenson," he said tonelessly. "Dave, take your mother home."

I shook my head. "I won't leave off hunting. It's my fault they got out, and I won't quit looking. I *can't.*"

Mom said, "All right, Davy. If you promise not to get separated from Mr. Cane, you can keep hunting."

"I'll keep him with me," Cane said. He looked straight at Mom. "Mrs. Carpenter, are you still quite sure that the merciful do obtain mercy?"

Mom turned her back and walked away.

■ WE KEPT UP our aimless searching all night. I was chilled to the bone. About three o'clock in the morning Cane built a fire and we stood over it, shivering.

"It didn't snow after all," I said to Cane. "You reckon it will?"

He shook his head. "Too cold."

"Little kids like them—they'll freeze, won't they?" I didn't really want him to answer, because I knew he'd have to agree.

"You have to remember they may already be home," he said. "There wouldn't be a way to get word to us."

I tried to fasten my mind on that hope, but it was no use. "I can't live if they aren't found!" I burst out at last. "It would hurt so bad, I couldn't live!"

His eyes looked me over coldly from across the fire. "You can live with anything," he said. "Grief and pain and—guilt. You can even live with hate. And that's the worst of all. . . ."

When morning came I was bushed. Cane made me go home. "You're holding me back," he said, so I gave up.

The preacher was at the house when I got there, and Mrs. Swenson. Mom had got out the afghan she'd started a long time ago and had tired of. She was crocheting furiously, as though it was all that mattered, but I saw that the pattern was all wrong.

The sun shone all day but the wind was icy. We knew that it could only end one way now.

Next morning the air was warm, almost balmy, and heavy dark clouds filled the sky, so that daylight was slow in coming.

Mrs. Swenson kept food and coffee ready for the searchers who came and went.

"It'll start snowing any minute now," Fred Finley, the ranger, said between gulps of coffee. "We've got to find them soon."

At ten o'clock the door opened and I looked up to see Charlie standing there.

"I came as soon as I heard, Margaret," he said. "Did anyone look over the mountain?"

"Oh, no!" she said. "They could never have gone so far. That's a hard climb."

"I'm going up there just the same. It's the only place they could be." He made a pack, moving quickly. A blanket, a can of soup, a flashlight. He stuffed his pockets with matches.

I had been putting on my coat and cap. "I'm going with you," I said.

"You'd hold me back," he answered. "I'm going to make tracks."

"I won't lag," I promised.

"Let him go," Mom said. "You may need his help . . . coming back."

■ I WAS hard put to it to follow Charlie after the path gave out, but I did. After a while the wind rose. The tall timbers rocked and swayed, clashed against each other, and the wailing, moaning sounds

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Timely Tips by Little Lulu

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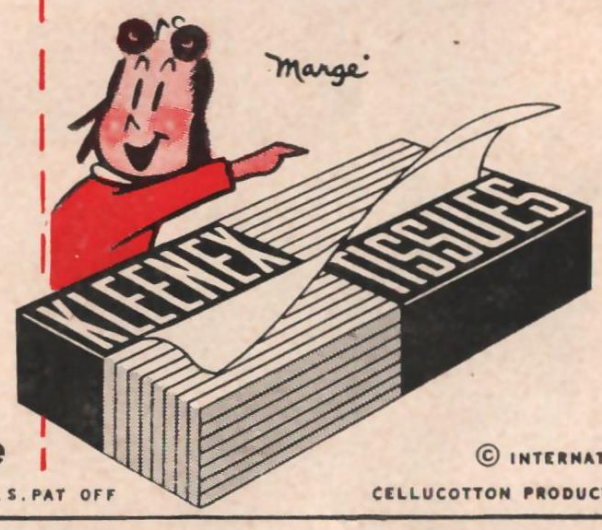

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they made were almost human. Once Charlie stopped and looked up at them. "Damned devilish trees! They sound like kids crying!"

As we neared the top it started snowing. Charlie stopped a minute to let me catch my breath. I was ashamed, but I had to have some air in my lungs.

"It was your fault they got away?" he asked.

I nodded, my eyes on the ground.

"Then you know how feeling guilty hurts. You ought to pity me."

I couldn't answer him. . . .

The going was easier from there on. Suddenly we came to an end of the trees and were looking out and down on a big rock waste. Charlie drew his binoculars from under his jacket and scanned the jagged rocks.

Suddenly he stopped moving the glasses, and I knew.

"Oh my God," he said brokenly, "if only I'd heard sooner! If only I'd never gone away!"

■ ONCE again we gathered under the aspens. The preacher looked down at the single casket where the twins lay; then he looked at us. "Friends and neighbors, I make a mighty poor shepherd. I can't say to your broken hearts, 'Praise the Lord; this was as He wanted it; we must not cry out against His will.' I only want to say right along with the rest of you, 'God, why do things like this have to happen?' So I can't rely on my own words to comfort you. I'll just have to read some verses from the Bible."

When he had finished reading he stuffed his Bible into his coat pocket. "That's all," he said to the undertaker.

Walking home through the snow, Charlie kept his arm around Mom. "Margaret," he said uneasily, "that batty old parson—he's hardly decent. I should've seen to bringing out a minister from Red Rock. One that could say the right things."

Mom shook her head. "The preacher was right. He took it on himself to say the words, and I feel more peaceful, somehow."

A few evenings later, while we sat around the fireplace trying not to feel how empty the house was, Charlie told us he was going away again. "I'm glad you've got the café," he said to Mom. "It'll give you something to think about. But if the going gets rough, you'll let me know, won't you?"

"If there's ever any way you can help, I'll give you the comfort of helping," Mom said. "But do you have to go?"

"I reckon I do," he nodded. "You see, I did murder Tom. I'm sure of that now. Oh, it wasn't like you thought, Dave," he said at my sudden gesture. "This is the way I figure it." He paused to stare into the fire. "You know that when I want something, I go after it. When I fell in love with your mother I knew it was all wrong, and I tried to fight my feelings down. I didn't want to go away. You folks were all so wonderful; you represented the happy family life I've never had. So I kept on ragging the problem around in my mind, and always came up with the same answer. My friendship for Tom, my respect for his marriage, my own sense of right and wrong, were things my temper couldn't fight.

"All the way on the hunt I was so blamed mad at fate for dealing such a dirty hand to such decent people. Then we jumped the buck. Tom fired, and I thought I did too but I know that I never pulled the trigger. That black devil that's my temper kept me from it, somehow.

"I still think it would have been all right if I hadn't slipped there on the trail.

That was the chance my temper was wanting, and I know I brought the rifle butt down harder than was necessary to check my fall." He let his head drop into his hands. "I couldn't believe it. It was against the code I've always lived by. But after I thought it all out, I knew it was true. God! I'd die a thousand deaths myself if it would bring him back!"

A coldness crawled through me like a snake. Since Charlie found the twins, I'd been hoping I was wrong about him. We were so terribly alone, and he was something to cling to, warmth and laughter.

Everything was gone now . . . everything. . . .

■ I FED on hate, I burned with guilt, and I was afraid to love or trust. I stood on the footbridge one bitter day and dropped my mouth harp into the frothing stream. I couldn't play it any more; music was a sound that made your heart remember.

I grew to my full height that winter, six feet even in my socks. Once it would have pleased me to know that now I was as tall as Charlie. I didn't need the admiring glances of the girls my age in West Creek to tell me I had inherited Mom's good features, but the bitterness that had rooted itself deep in me showed in my eyes; when I looked in a mirror I had an uneasy feeling that I was beginning to resemble not Charlie but Cane.

Emmy was growing up too. A door seemed to have closed between us, and though we were still friendly we were no longer friends. We met now only by chance, and then found little to talk about. Once, toward spring, we met on the creek path.

"I came out to watch the sun set," she said.

"It doesn't seem to matter to me any more," I said. "Sometimes I'm not even sure there *is* a sun."

She looked at the flaming colors in the west. "I know what you mean. Once the sunset was a world, and I could go there. Now it's just another day marked off."

I felt a surge of my old liking for her. "How is your mother?" I asked, for want of something better.

"She isn't well."

"Have you had the doctor?"

"No." She turned to go; I barely heard her answer. "My father believes that if God wants us to get well He will heal us."

That night I walked Mom back from the café. It was doing good business, but she was working too hard, so when we went inside the house I made her sit down while I fixed coffee for us.

Suddenly there was a frantic beating on the door and a voice calling through sobs. "Davy! Davy, let me in! Davy!"

I jerked the door open. Emmy was there, her eyes blank with terror. Blood was streaming from an awful gash on her cheek, flooding her lips and spilling down her chin. She didn't seem to know she was hurt. "Mama's dying," she kept saying. "You've got to come, Mrs. Carpenter. She wants you to come. Oh, *please* hurry!"

But Mom wouldn't be hurried. She made her sit down while I got water and a towel.

"It ought to have stitches," she worried. "Look, baby, we'll go to your mother, but I'll have to tape this first. Hold tight, now. Davy, get some aspirin."

In a few minutes Emmy seemed calmer.

"Now we'll go," Mom said. "But first tell me what hurt you."

Emmy's eyes blackened in terror. "My father hit me. With—with the butcher knife." She faltered over the words. "I—I guess he meant to use the flat side. I'm sure he did."

Mom turned to me. "You run and get the preacher, Davy. He'll help us."

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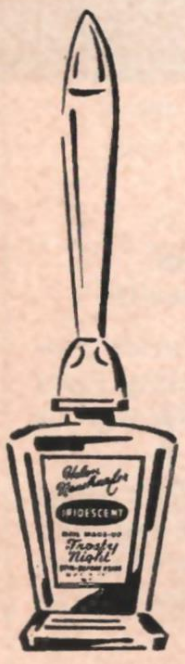

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The preacher wanted to go to the Canes' alone when I told him. "The man's mad," he said. "He might try to finish us all off. I'll go."

But Mom's Irish was up, and it was she who led the way.

As Emmy opened the door Mrs. Cane called shrilly, "Who's there?" Her bed had been moved into the big room and she was propped up against the pillows. Light from the lamp showed us how wasted and wan she had become.

"It's me, Mama," Emmy said, dropping to her knees beside the bed. "And Mrs. Carpenter and Davy and the preacher."

"Where's your father? He hurt you, didn't he?"

"I'm all right, Mama. I don't know where he went."

Mrs. Cane held out her hand to Mom. "Mrs. Carpenter, I want you to help my little girl. Keep her with you and teach her to be the kind of woman you are. Help her forget. My husband can't interfere. He's not her father."

There was a silence broken only by the sound of her heavy breathing. At last she spoke again. "Preacher, this is going to sound mighty wicked to you but my husband and I never loved each other. He wanted me and I married him because he could give me a home. By the time I met Emmy's father I was starved for affection.

"When I knew Emmy was coming, I was frantic. I begged my husband to give me a divorce, but he wouldn't, and he started praying to God to punish me. The day Emmy was born, God did. I've never seen my baby's face.

"Preacher, there's a part in the Bible I wish you'd read to me. Where it says, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.' I kind of forget how it goes."

Mrs. Cane died that night and I was sent to fetch Mrs. Swenson. It wasn't till later, when the menfolks got to looking around, that they found Cane, a rope around his neck, hanging from a rafter in the mill. When I told the preacher he shook his head in wonder. "Life does strange things to us, Davy. Fear of Cane and her own sense of guilt had more to do with Mrs. Cane's blindness than God did. Oh, well, we must forget everything but Emmy now. She's a hardy little soul. We'll see her blossom yet."

With the death of Cane the sawmill closed down. He had willed everything to his brother Noel in South America. Mom's café suffered a heavy loss of business when the mill workers moved out. Even the Swensons left. The logging crews stayed on, sending timbers by truck to the sawmill below us.

I took work when it was to be had, but that wasn't steady enough, and Mom got pneumonia the next spring and didn't come out of it like she should. Emmy was a mighty big help now, taking care of her while I ran the café.

The doctor from Red Rock came up now and then to check Mom over. "There's been some really serious damage to her heart," he told me. "Complete rest will put her back on her feet, but it's going to take time. I don't mean a month or six weeks. I mean a year or two."

The medicine was expensive and the White Tulip paid off less and less. Then we got a letter from Noel Cane. He had learned through his lawyer that Emmy was with us. "I know my brother left her unprovided for," he wrote, "and I'm grateful to you for helping her. As soon as I'm free of my commitments here, I intend to return to the States. Then I will either sell the mill or take over the running of it myself. But it may be some time before I can leave."

Emmy grew and, as the preacher said, blossomed. She seemed to have shed her past as completely as the locust sheds his outgrown shell. Had it not been for the rough scar on her cheek, she would have been beautiful.

I knew she loved me but I felt nothing at all for her or anyone else. I had trained myself not to feel. People had hurt me. To heck with people. I could get along alone. Time and the seasons slipped past without any regard. Money became my reason for living.

One day we got a letter from Charlie, and a check. Mom cried when I tore it up. "We ought to let him help, Davy. He'd feel better about things. This way, he'll think we're holding a grudge."

"I can take care of you without his help," I said fiercely. But my fingers were reluctant to lay his letter down. Something deep in me seemed to beg, *Forget the past; it's the future that counts.* Still, the bitterness I had nursed so long would not be uprooted so easily. "I'm going to Denver," I told Mom. "I can get work there and send money home. When the sawmill opens again maybe you can sell the café."

■ I HATED the city, the noise and rush and smoke of it, the people dashing here and there, eyes turned inward on their own thoughts, intent on their own duties.

I soon learned there were very few jobs I was fitted to do. Finally I got work in a hamburger joint. The pay was okay; I could live on it and send enough home to Mom to make it worth while.

I had a letter from Christine in February. She was back teaching in the West Creek school. "I couldn't stay away forever," she wrote. "I felt like an exile. Noel Cane is here now, getting set to reopen the mill, so it looks like West Creek will boom again. By the way, he's a wonderful guy. He doesn't look a bit like Cane; he has black hair, blue eyes and freckles. And a sense of humor and a kindly heart.

"By the way, I saw Charlie last year. Someone (could it have been you, Davy?) has convinced him that he murdered your father. Now that you're grown up, sit down and think it all over. Remember everything you ever knew about him; then you'll see that even his subconscious wouldn't want him to kill a friend.

"He's miserable, Davy. Write and tell him that he isn't guilty, and make him believe it."

Just for a minute her matter-of-fact, common sense words convinced me. I could sit down and write to Charlie and suddenly everything would be right for me again. I could feel the warmth and laughter of his friendship again, and the cold fingers of hate that clutched my heart would melt away.

That night a fever began to burn in me. When morning came I dressed and went out on the street and started walking.

I kept on without aim or intention till I passed a lumber yard. The wind was blowing from the sawdust pile and suddenly I could smell pines, and the roar of traffic became the roar of West Creek flooded by melting snows. Then I knew where I was going. Home!

Sometime that day I got a ride with a trucker that took me into Wyoming. I walked again and it started to snow. I kept on till I couldn't go any more, and when I lay down in the snow I knew I would freeze to death, but somehow it didn't matter.

When my head cleared again I was in bed. The incessant, monotonous bleating of sheep was hurting my head. I turned my eyes from the curved canvas top of the sheep wagon. A man was stuffing wood into the little stove.

He looked like something dragged out of a deep dark cave. His black hair, powdered with gray, had been months in need of a cutting. A wild snarl of beard hid all of his face but his strange yellow eyes and long twisted nose. His body was twisted too, and he carried a thick, grotesque hump high on his shoulders, which, combined with his hairy head and face, made him look like a two-legged buffalo.

He looked up just then, and, meeting my gaze, bared his gums and snaggled teeth in a grin. "Well, by gonnies! I do b'lieve you're over your spree."

His voice surprised me. It wasn't cracked and coarse like I had expected, but deep, warm-toned and rhythmic. "You must have fished me out of the snow," I said.

"Yup," he nodded. "The dogs found you bedded down in a drift. Looked like you was fixin' for a long winter's nap."

"Reckon I was," I agreed. "How long ago?"

"Two days. Might as well tell you right now, I know more about you than you know about yourself. You was fizzin' like a bottle o' riled-up beer with the cap off. You spilled the works." He lifted the lid on a kettle and poked around at the contents with a long-handled fork. "You better go home and talk the whole thing over with your maw. You're a mess."

His words stung, but I decided to overlook their meaning. "Whatever you've got in that kettle," I said, "smells gosh-awful good to me."

■ IN THE WEEK it took me to get back on my feet I got to know and like Pete Parnell. He was kindly, humorous and keen. He liked to be alone through the day but at sundown when he brought the sheep in to the corral for the night, he was ready for companionship.

He sang when the mood seized him, whether in the middle of a meal or the middle of the night. Sometimes he did what he called "opera imitations," and they were good.

Once I said, "You could be famous. I know it."

"Don't kid yourself." He looked at his reflection in the cracked piece of mirror. "Baboons might sing but who would listen? Sometimes I think I must have been one of God's nightmares. I'm just like a sausage—lots of good things stuffed into an ugly covering. I wouldn't mind if the women didn't. I'm decent and honorable; I'd like to have a wife. That's a laugh, huh? Me with a wife?"

I asked him if he thought I could get a job with the outfit herding sheep.

"You're going home, remember?" His eyes were determined. "Herdin's a dog's job, anyhow. I took the job to tide me through the winter. They're bringing out a man to take my place next Saturday. Then I think I'll see you home."

So Pete went with me to West Creek. We caught a ride in with a lumber truck. The driver told us the sawmill was running full tilt.

I found Mom in the kitchen, baking pies. She looked older, moved more slowly, but she was still the most beautiful woman in the world.

"Hi, Mom," I said around the sudden lump in my throat. "How about a piece of pie?"

After a while when she'd caught her breath I introduced Pete to her. "Mom, this is the man who saved my life."

"God bless you for bringing my boy home," Mom said to him, and she kissed him on the cheek.

"Well, I'm damned!" Pete said in awe.

"Emmy's down by the creek," Mom said. "Run find her, Davy, while I make coffee."

Emmy was standing by the footbridge, her back to me. I slipped up and put my arms around her. She struggled for a minute like a frightened bird, and then she saw me. "Oh Davy, Davy, you're home!" Her face was like a sunrise.

She had grown beautiful. I wasn't prepared for the impact of feeling that swept through me at the feel and sight of her.

"Emmy, my darling," I whispered, and then I was kissing her.

At last she said shakily, "Davy, you do care! You love me!"

Love? "I don't believe in love," I said, but I forced a smile and she smiled back.

■ IT WAS wonderful to be sitting in Mom's kitchen again, eating cherry pie, breathing the scent of pine and feeling the warmth of the friendly old stove. Mom told me she had sold the café to a fellow named Arnold.

"I haven't been inside," she said, "but the place has a different look. By the way, Christine came back with a lot of ideas about my tulips. She says I can sell them, especially the white ones. She wants me to go at it in a businesslike way. Of course, you know Christine; she's always getting steamed up over things. Remember how madly in love she was with Charlie? Well, now it's Noel Cane."

Christine and Noel came over that evening. It was good to see Christine's pert, wise little face again, and I liked Noel.

After I'd listened to Christine's tulip statistics a while I knew she wasn't talking through her hat; she'd studied the subject.

"I was figuring on a job at the mill," I said, "but this sounds better."

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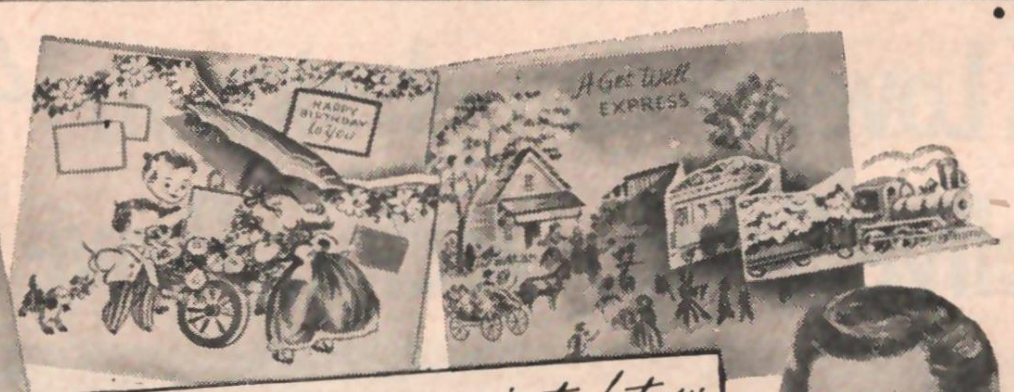

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The next day, however, I met Marie Bishop, and I forgot about tulips.

I'd decided to look the café over. Mom was right; it was a changed place. Arnold had put green glass in the windows and the interior was now intimately dim. The long counter where Mom had served coffee and doughnuts was a bar. There were slot machines along one wall and a juke box on the other.

I took a table and ordered a beer. It was quitting time for the men at the mill and the place was jammed. The smoke was like fog. I didn't spot any familiar faces and I was about to leave when someone said, "It's time for Marie."

I looked up as she came in from one of the back rooms that had been added on. Her body, in a green high-necked dress, was as tempting as ripe fruit. Her gold hair matched her golden sandals. Her face was like a flower. She was everything pure and innocent . . . until you looked into those green eyes. Then you knew that she was wise to men and their ways. But you didn't believe it; anyway, I didn't.

She mounted a low stool and one of the men brought a guitar from behind the juke box and strummed it softly. Marie sang a popular love song, and her warm, husky voice was the kind that sends ripples up your spine. When she finished I made myself look away, and that's when I saw Pete in the doorway, regarding her scornfully.

She sang several more songs, then stepped from the stool, laughing. "That's all for now, my friends. See you later."

The men stepped back to let her pass and none tried to touch her, though desire was in their eyes. Man takes no liberties with a tigress.

I took a job at the sawmill the next day so I'd have money enough to hang out at the café and it wasn't long before Marie and I were meeting in a secluded spot along the creek during my noon hour. I lived for those moments. We talked only about unimportant things. She was complete escape from the past. There was nothing in her eyes that cared what I had been or what I had become.

One day I dared to take her in my arms and kiss her.

I wanted the kiss to last forever but she brought me back to earth. "Well, David! I was beginning to think you didn't like me!"

"I love you, Marie." With her in my arms, I could believe in love again.

She tipped back her head and studied my face, her green eyes amused and speculative. "There's no such thing as love. Liking, yes, and wanting. But if we love at all, it's only ourselves, never the other person. Don't you agree?"

I stepped back from her. "I've known for a long time that's how it was, but just for a minute I was hoping—look, Marie, will you marry me anyway? Love or no love?"

"Don't be silly," she said. "You haven't a cent to your name, and never will have more than a bare living."

"Does money matter?" I was feeling a little sick.

"In marriage, money is *all* that matters," she said. "When I marry, it will be some big shot like Noel Cane. I lived with poverty once. I don't intend to ever again. There's nothing on earth I wouldn't do if the price was right."

I put my arm around her again and my heart was beating double time. "Then I'm going to get some cash. How much would it take?"

A sultry fire began to burn deep in her green eyes. "Not so much, David. Not for you. I'm crazy about you, really."

I wasn't much good on the job that day. I was trying not to think that Marie

was all her words implied. Yet how could I condemn her even if she was? I couldn't because her ideals were no different from my own. She had thrown my own words at me. We were two of a kind. And I wanted her, no matter how. I wanted more of that sweet forgetfulness.

■ PETE DIDN'T LOOK for a job. He spent his time exploring the surrounding country. He would be gone sometimes a week or more, then stay home a few days and take off again. One night he came in after Mom and Emmy had turned in. I had stayed up to smoke my pipe and scheme up a plot for some quick cash.

Pete might have been an answer to my dream. His eyes were excited. "Look, Dave," he said, "I been proddin' around up in the high country, up there where even God can't make a tree. Look what I found." He unknotted a dingy red handkerchief and spilled the contents on the table.

I caught my breath, not quite believing. "Great guns!" I breathed. "Gold!"

"Pure an' simple," he grinned, "and there's plenty left up there. I'll take you along if you want. You could earn enough for a nice setup for you and Emmy."

My hand froze above the dust. "Emmy?"

"Heck," he said, "you think I don't know? She's all you talked about while you were sick. How grand she was, how much you loved her. I got tired listening."

"I said I *loved* her?"

"Them was your very words," he answered. "Now that I've seen her I don't blame you none. You want to go with me, son?"

I let my hand settle over the dust. "Count me in, pardner," I said softly.

So the first day of June we made for the high country. The place Pete had found was above timber line. Somewhere up in the jagged granite crown of the mountain was a glacier that fed a narrow stream of water stair-stepped by falls and tiny whirlpools. It was in these pools that nature had cached her treasures.

Some days our only reward for our labor was the aching cramps that plagued our arms and shoulders from constant dipping in the ice cold water. Other times made up for that, when we'd hit an almost solid pocket of gold.

It was Marie who drove me, kept me bending feverishly over the gold pan, yet it was Emmy I thought of when I found a nugget, and these I put away for her. I thought of her too when I heard a bird sing or found a spider's web strung with bright beads of dew.

It was beautiful up there, and lonely. When the wolverine started deviling us I almost welcomed him as a break in the monotony, but Pete was outraged by every prank the varment pulled on us. He fairly prayed for just one good shot at him, but on the rare times we happened to catch sight of the stocky, bear-like little fiend we were without our rifles.

Each night at the cabin we divided our pannings and I would heft the growing weight of the buckskin bag. If I worked hard enough, long enough, Marie would marry me. I was sure she would.

One morning I glanced out the cabin window at the silent rush of snow. It meant we'd make tracks for home today, and I was glad of it; I'd had enough of nature and her silences for a while.

Pete took quick gulps of coffee from the tin can that served as a cup and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand. "That wolverine! That blasting, thieving demon! For a plugged nickel and a good trap I'd stay here till I caught him, if it took forever! That four-legged devil drug off my hand ax last night!" He scooped a handful of rabbit bones from the table and clattered them onto his plate. "You know, Dave, an animal like that is like a vampin' woman, always takin' what ain't hers by rights."

"Forget him," I said. "Today we'll turn our backs on him and the mountain."

He shook his head gloomily. "I dunno. All my life I've heard trappers and Indians spout tales about the wolverine being an evil spirit, with power over humans. Never worried me none, but this one, somehow . . . I've had the dangdest feeling he's out to nail up my hide."

I laughed. I could laugh easily, now that the snow had come and released us from the mountain. No more backbreaking days over the gold pan. No more lonely days and nights. No more looking at Pete's ugly, misshapen nose and yellow eyes across the table. I was sick of watching him shovel greasy food through that black haystack of a beard.

Then I put my hand to my face and felt the brown brush of a beard nearly as profuse as his. "By Jinx," I exclaimed. "I'm a regular bush-devil. Can't remember what I really look like!"

Pete shoved back from the table. "Let's get a move on. Wish we were out ahead of this storm." He chuckled like rattling stones. "Don't forget your fortune; it's a long hike back."

I clattered the dishes into a pan of water that sputtered on the stove, rinsed them and turned them down to dry on the pitted iron of the stove top. There the next occupant of the cabin would find them, ready for use. I was into my jacket and out the door before the wet tins had stopped hissing and spitting at the heat.

It wasn't cold outside but the flakes were as big as hens' eggs. I felt them squish against my cap and jacket as I went

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around the cabin. *The sooner we put a day's travel between us and the timber line, the better,* I thought.

I raised the lid of the wood box, feeling the familiar tightening in my throat that always came when I looked at the two little buckskin bags that held my cache. I tossed out the twisted, pungent pine knots that had covered the bags.

They were gone.

I couldn't believe it. I threw out the remaining chunks of wood with frantic haste. No bags among the clutter of chips and bark that had accumulated over the dirt bottom of the box. I dug in the snow, and about a foot from the hole turned up one limp bag. That was all.

I leaned against the cabin feeling weak and sick, clutching the bag in my hand. This was all that was left of my summer's labor, these little crumbling nuggets I had put aside for Emmy. I don't know how long I stood there, dazed, when I looked up and saw Pete floundering toward me through the snow. Like a flash in a dark room a picture blinked in my mind: Pete, going out last night and coming in a half hour later with an armful of wood for the stove.

"What the heck!" His eyes took in the scattered wood and scooped-out snow.

"Okay, Pete," I said evenly. "Where'd you put it?"

He squinted at me. "What's bitin' you, Dave? Gone off your nut?"

"I want my dust!" I shouted. "You took it out of the wood box last night!"

"You're as crazy as a hoot owl! I was looking for my hand ax, thought you might've used it here. Wait, lemme have a look." He walked over and peered into the box. "That wolverine! That's what it was. He take it all, son?"

I nodded. It could have been the wolverine, yet all day as I followed Pete down-country through the snow I kept thinking, *But maybe it wasn't, and I aim to find out.*

About three o'clock I shot a snowshoe rabbit and at dusk we made camp among the spruce. Pete built a fire that smoked sulkily and spitted the rabbit above it. Our boots were soaked, the trees had shed snow down our necks and our legs ached from the long hike over treacherous rooting. We were grumpy and silent.

I pulled a rag from my pocket and started drying my Winchester. Suddenly the fire seemed to throw too much light on my loss. Where would I turn now that the money was gone and Marie was lost to me?

Pete leaned to turn the rabbit and I jerked the rifle to my shoulder. "I want that dust," I said grimly. "Skin it off and hand it over."

He didn't move from his half-crouch by the fire except to turn his head. "I got only my own. You robbin' your own pardner?"

"Hand it over," I said.

He moved then, plunging straight for me. A voice in my mind said, *Now!* and I pulled the trigger. Pete fell heavily into the snow, face down, and lay still.

I threw out the empty shell and watched a new one take its place. Then I turned the rifle muzzle on the burning knot of shame that was my heart.

"Don't, Dave," Pete's voice said. "Nothin's ever that bad."

He stood up and I saw he wasn't hurt. I dropped my gun in the snow and bawled like a baby.

"Shush up," he said. "I saw in your eyes you meant business, so I flopped just in time. Set up to the fire now and we'll eat this bunny. You still think I took your gold?"

I shook my head. "I'm a double-damned fool. You ought to whip me good."

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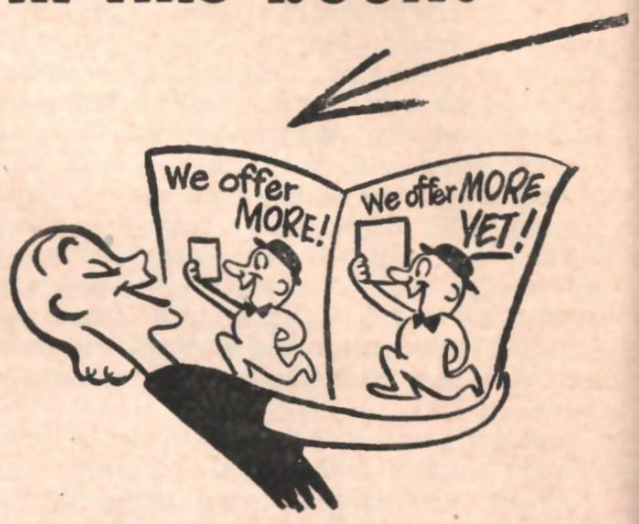

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MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

"Maybe I will yet," he grinned. "Right now, I'm going to split my dust with you. That's what bein' pardners means. Forget what happened. It was just that old wolverine making a last try for my hide."

"It's more than that, Pete, and you know it," I answered. "Like you told me once, I'm a mess. I've built myself a nice private hell, and now I don't want to live in it. But I don't know how to get out."

He tossed a rabbit bone into the fire. "You've been a coward, Dave. You couldn't trust yourself, so you wouldn't trust nobody else. You was afraid to love, not because you might hurt somebody, but because you might get hurt yourself. You got some things to settle with Emmy there, I'd say."

"I can't," I said. "I realize now that I'm not worthy of her."

"You will be. But first you go find this Charlie and make him realize he never murdered your dad. He felt guilty and you accused him, so he condemned himself. It takes more than subconsciousness to make a man shoot his best friend in the back. It takes hate and greed, and a mean mind, and those Charlie doesn't have. You can square yourself, Dave, if you try. If you *don't* try, then's when I whip you. And good!"

■ IT WAS LATE the next day when we hiked into West Creek. Pete stopped at the café for a drink and I headed for home by the creek path. Halfway, I met Christine. "Hi there, Miss Adams," I grinned at her.

"Mrs. Cane, to you," she said. "I'm an old married woman now."

"Well, that calls for a kiss!"

"Davy, Charlie came back three weeks ago." Her eyes never left my face.

I felt suddenly warm and alive. "Good! He's just the man I want to see."

"Wait a minute," she said. "He and your mother plan to get married on Friday. If you say one thing to change their minds I'll grab an ax and run you out of West Creek, so help me!"

I kissed her then and she stood staring after me as I ran up the path. I pushed the living room door open and looked in. Mom and Charlie were sitting in the easy chairs before the fireplace, Charlie smoking his pipe and Mom crocheting. Charlie turned and met my eyes, and his own were suddenly filled with defeat. "Hello, Dave," he said dully.

"Hi, Mom, Charlie," I said. "Christine just told me. I'm glad I got back in time for the wedding." I put my arm around Mom. "Charlie, you're the only man on earth good enough for her, and I'll be proud to be your son."

I saw Charlie square his shoulders like a load had been lifted from them as he held out his hand to me.

I looked up and saw Emmy standing in the kitchen doorway. "Emmy," I said, "there's a sunset going on outside. Will you come with me?"

"Yes, Davy," she said softly, her eyes lit like candles.

* * *

All West Creek turned out for the double wedding. The schoolhouse was packed full. The preacher looked at us and smiled. His frail hands held his Bible but he did not open it. "This is one of those times that seem so right and perfect that man would like to claim the credit," he said quietly, "but we who have given God wholehearted blame in the past must now give Him wholehearted praise for this day of rejoicing. He has proven the old adage, 'Keep your face always toward the sunshine, and the shadows will fall behind you.'"

I squeezed Emmy's hand. I was wise now. I was sure that I'd never turn my back on the sun again. *The End*

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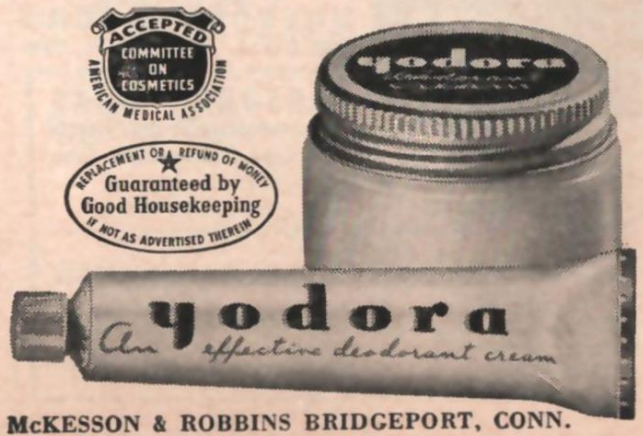

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DESSERTS ARE GOOD FOR YOU (*Continued from page 75*)

ZABAGLIONE

Beat until very light 4 egg yolks and ½ cup confectioner's sugar. Place in top of double boiler over boiling water. Do not permit the water to touch the bottom of the double boiler top. Beat the custard constantly with a wire whisk. When it is foamy, add gradually ¼ cup sherry or Madeira wine. Continue to beat until custard doubles in bulk and begins to thicken. Remove from heat. Whip until stiff 4 egg whites and 1/16 teaspoon salt. Fold in the custard. Serve warm in sherbet glasses.

SOUTHERN PECAN PIE

The secret of a good pecan pie is the pecans. Don't skimp on them.

¼ cup butter
⅔ cup brown sugar firmly packed
Dash of salt
¾ cup dark corn syrup
3 eggs well beaten
1 full cup pecan halves
1 teaspoon vanilla
Eight-inch unbaked pie shell

Using a ready-mix package, roll the pie shell into shape. In a bowl, cream together butter, sugar, salt. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour into pie shell and bake in hot (450°) oven for 10 minutes. Reduce to low heat (325°) and bake until knife inserted in pie comes out clean, about fifty minutes. Cool and top with whipped cream—if you dare!

HOMEMADE OR HANDMADE (*Continued from page 76*) rustproof pins; an accurate measuring tape. Equip yourself with a good working light. And, above all, invest in good patterns and generous amounts of fabric. Sometimes a professional seamstress can get a skirt out of two yards of material when the pattern calls for three, but for the amateur this ill-advised penny-pinching is likely to be disastrous.

Fit before you cut. Spread out on your bed the best-fitting dress you own and lay your new paper pattern on top of it. If the pattern is too long in the waist and sleeves or too wide at the shoulders, now is the time to make changes by taking tucks in the pattern at the necessary places. A pattern can be made larger by reversing the process. Don't cut the dress too big and count on changing the finished garment.

Lay it straight. Your pattern must be placed on the fabric so that the crosswise threads are perfectly horizontal at the bust, waist and hipline. If they are crooked, your dress will fit you like a corkscrew.

Details matter. You can tell a cheap dress from an expensive one by looking at the seams (they should be pinked or overcast) and at the buttonholes. Buttonholes should be one-eighth of an inch longer than the width of the button, placed one-half the width of the button from the edge of the garment and sewed neatly and tightly, with no stray threads fraying along the hole. Hems are tricky. They sometimes have to be uneven in order to look even. The hem must be marked while you are modeling the dress. Have another person help you or use an automatic hem marker. Many new sewing machines have blind-stitch attachments, a modern blessing that will save you hours of tedious hand hemming.

Wear it with assurance. Unless you have a perfect figure, every good dress deserves a good girdle underneath it. Pull your stockings up tight. Hold your shoulders straight and your head high and sweep into the room as though you were showing off a Schiaparelli original. Brag about your sewing. "My clothes are all custom-made—by me!"

The End

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PUTTY IN HIS HANDS (*Continued from page 39*) police badge in his hand. Instead I saw that a loop of the green wool from my knitting bag had become entangled in his cuff buttons. That was all, but before I could even feel relief, he said quietly, "Looks as if you're caught, doesn't it?"

In my upset state the choice of words seemed deliberate. I jerked viciously at the wool, broke it and hurried away. But not far. Before my feet could carry me to the door they slowed and I turned at the center counter, where I pretended to be making out a check. To get out while I had the chance—that would have been the natural impulse. But a stronger one supplanted it, the determination to finish the job. Nothing could swerve me, no danger alter this implacable inner command.

So I simply stood, rigid, back turned, while the man finished his business. There was a bad moment when I felt him stop behind me but finally, reluctantly, as I gave no sign of awareness, he moved on.

The instant the swinging doors slapped shut behind him, I relaxed. A quick glance assured me that the way was now clear to the cashier's cage. Approaching it briskly, I placed my knitting bag in the wicket opening and, with a smile, recited my opening speech. "This is a stick-up. Take all the cash out of your drawer and put it in this bag. Greenbacks only, no silver. And be very quick and very quiet if you want to keep on living."

"What?" Comical. the look on the college-boy face of the cashier. But not so funny was the motion of his left hand as it started to drop below the counter.

"Press that buzzer," I warned softly, "and the top of your head gets blown off. I have three men with guns covering you."

"Okay, okay!" Freckles stood out on his face. "But it won't get you much. I've hardly any cash on hand."

"Enough to cover the weekly pay roll checks of the Everide Oil Company," I said. "Now snap to it before my friends get the idea you're pulling a stall."

Convinced, he began shoveling stacks of money into the bag. Watching closely, I said, "That's it. Now close the bag and leave the wool and needles showing. All right. Now hands flat on the counter for three minutes after I walk out of here. Three minutes, remember. One minute for each guy with a gun. After that you can holler your head off, if you've still got a head." I took the bag and walked swiftly toward the side entrance.

The kid was braver than I thought. Hardly was I on the sidewalk before the alarm went off. But the pandemonium caused by the clattering bell would confuse pursuit for the necessary few seconds.

Just as I pulled away from the curb the cashier and a uniformed bank guard burst out the door. The guard fired a couple of shots in the air, a woman screamed and the cop at the intersection came running. Through the rear-view mirror I saw that the cashier had spotted me and was gesturing wildly in my direction. Smiling, I stepped on the gas. Let them try to read the numbers on that license plate!

■ THE MAN at the garage scowled at the returned car. "Where you been drivin', through a hog waller? That'll be a buck extra for a car wash."

I paid without protest and went into the ladies' room. There I took a driver's license from my purse. It gave my name as Mary Thatcher of 2021 East Alder Street. There was no such person and the address was a vacant lot. I tore it up and flushed it down the toilet. Then I took off my hat,

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As for the BREAKFAST CLUB gang, fast-and-funny SAM COWLING has just presented his 10,000th item from the Fiction-and-Fact-from-Sam's-Almanac feature that highlights each show. (You may remember one of SAM's own favorites: "Living with your mother-in-law is like taking a bath. After a while is isn't so hot.") Sam said it. We didn't!

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Joan Lansing

stuffed it in the knitting bag, fluffed up my short hair and set out to walk the six blocks home. Not for me a taxicab whose driver might have a good memory!

Climbing the stairs of my dingy apartment house, I hummed to myself. Leo Dalton, my fiancé, would be waiting. He was a vacuum cleaner salesman, door-to-door and not much money, but his hours were his own. We often met in the afternoon like this when I'd been working overtime at the store and was entitled to time off, but it was extra special today. Not only would we spend the afternoon together but I would be able to break the news that now we had enough money to get married on. How to explain the money seemed to present no problem. Whatever I said, I was sure Leo would believe me. He was always saying, in that tender voice of his, how much he loved and trusted me.

I opened the door. He was sitting by the window, waiting. He jumped up and took me in his arms. "Eileen, dearest darling," he said, nuzzling his cheek against mine, "you've had a hard morning, I can tell. My poor darling, you look so pale and tired."

I became suddenly aware that it was true; I was almost exhausted from the nervous strain. I sat down and his fingers slid under my hair, massaging my neck, a trick that always relieved the tension. There was wonderful power in his hands and voice. He was saying softly, "You need sleep now, my darling. Put your mind at rest. I promise that when you wake, all will be clear. You will remember. . . ."

It was dark when I awoke. I was lying on my bed with a cover over me. I was bathed in perspiration and shuddering from what must have been a horrible nightmare. And yet it had seemed so real that I could recall every detail. I had dreamed that I had walked boldly into a bank and robbed it! Carried out the cash in my knitting bag! Ridiculous! And yet I couldn't shake the feeling that it had really happened.

I lay where I was, feeling a sick dismay. Was I going to add nightmares to my other trouble, those worrisome times when I'd forget what I'd done and where I'd been? I'd suddenly look at a clock and find myself unable to account for the past hours. Leo would help me. He always did when that happened. He'd go over with me in detail the hours I couldn't account for. "You had a headache, Eileen, remember? And I massaged your neck and you slept a little. When you awoke I suggested we take in a movie."

"And," I would ask fearfully, "did we go?"

"Of course. We just got home a few minutes ago. Are you *sure* you don't remember?"

I would realize with despair that everything had blanked out for me from the first soothing touch of his hand on my forehead. But we had found he could cure these lapses; all he had to do as he worked on me was to say reassuringly, "Don't worry; this time I won't let you forget. You will remember, Eileen. You will remember everything."

It worked so well that I had come to depend on it, like a drug, to keep me going. I didn't know how Leo could put up with me. But he never complained and his sweetness and his love were always there for me to lean on and we had both been so encouraged lately because the lapses seemed to have been conquered. And now, bad dreams!

A sudden horrifying thought convulsed me—*was* it a dream? I distinctly remembered Leo feeding me the little you-will-not-forget formula just before I dropped into a deep sleep. Did that mean I actual-

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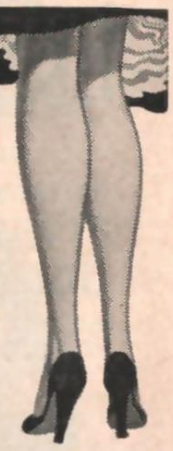

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MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

ly *had* robbed a bank? I jumped up and burst into the living room. If Leo had gone home—

But he was still there. He'd made himself a pot of coffee and a sandwich and was lying on the davenport, reading. He looked up and saw me and smiled his quick smile. "Have a nice nap, honey?" Then, his expression changing, "Why, Eileen, you look so strange. What's the matter?"

The matter was that I'd suddenly caught sight of the knitting bag on the table. A length of lime green wool trailed from it. And the bag was bulky! There was only one conclusion and it shot through my body like a bolt of lightning and jarred me to the heels. "Leo, that bag," I choked. "Open it! I—I'm afraid to look!"

"This?" He picked it up by one of its wooden handles. The bag sagged open and the ball of yarn and my squashed straw hat tumbled out. The rest was crammed solid with bills, held in stacks by paper bands. Leo stared at them in utter stupefaction.

"Oh my God!" I had to clutch a chair back for support. "It's true, then! Oh God, it's true! I hoped I'd dreamed it but I didn't. *I robbed the bank!*"

"Eileen!" Quick as a cat he was at my side, his fingers digging into my shoulders, shaking the hysteria out of me. "Get hold of yourself! Do you want the whole neighborhood to hear you?"

Sobbing, I collapsed against him. He got me onto the davenport, sat down beside me and took a firm grip on my twisting hands. "Now calm yourself," he commanded sternly, "and tell me exactly what happened."

I tossed my head from side to side, moaning. "Oh, I must have been out of my mind! I've never stolen anything in my life! There *must* be some explanation!"

"That's what I'm waiting to hear," he said grimly. "Begin at the beginning. What bank? Who helped you?"

"No one. I was alone. I walked into the State Bank—it was noontime and crowded—and I made the cashier think I had some men with me who would kill him if he didn't hand over the money." I shuddered. "Oh Leo, how could I have thought of such a thing? I don't know when or where I got the idea. All of a sudden I was just there and doing it. I know it doesn't make sense, but I swear to you that that's the way it was!"

"Please, Eileen, get hold of yourself. There, that's better. Now, you say you just walked in and took the money, but how did you get away?"

"I rented a car; I remember that. And I remember driving it out of town to a deserted lane and smearing mud all over the license plates."

Leo frowned. "But you would have had to produce a driver's license before you could rent the car."

I stared at him, remembering Mary Thatcher of 2021 East Alder Street. "I must have taken out a phony license," I whispered, "because I had one. And afterward I destroyed it. But," my voice rose, "I don't remember taking any driver's test! I was always afraid to because I'm such a poor driver I was sure I'd never pass. I drove that car all by myself and never gave it a second thought. That's what makes the whole thing so fantastic. It isn't *like* me, Leo. None of it is like anything I would do!"

"I know," he said gravely. "There's something almost—well, mysterious about it. We've got to think it out."

I shook my head hopelessly. "I've got to turn myself over to the police. They won't believe me. They'll put me in jail. But that's what I deserve."

"*Is* it, I wonder." He stared at me

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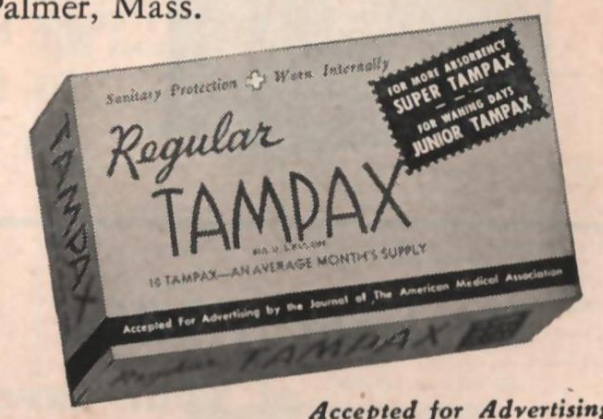

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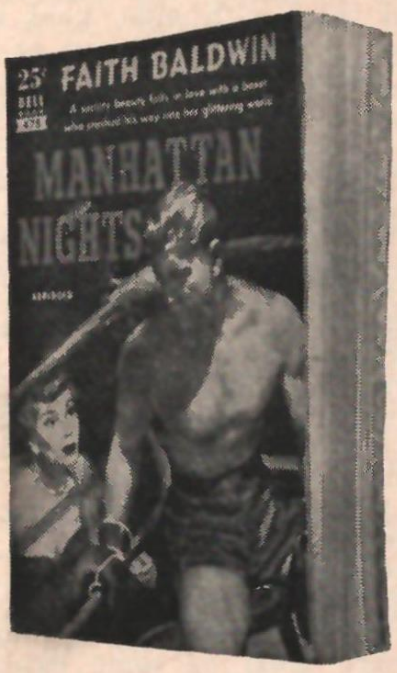

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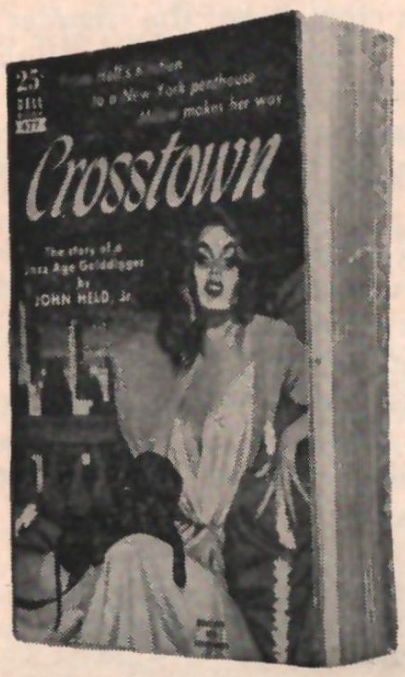

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strangely. "Darling, I've been thinking very carefully about your actions lately—those odd lapses of memory. And now this. Eileen, you've heard of something called a 'split personality'? Some people have a thing called schizophrenia; they're two different people in one."

"But—" I could hardly get it out, "that's a mental disease, isn't it?"

He said quickly, "We needn't worry about that part of it. The point is, it would account for everything. You weren't yourself when you robbed that bank."

Not myself. Someone else. My other personality. It was the only possible explanation, and it was hideous! They'd put me in an insane asylum!

Leo pulled me to him in a fierce embrace. "Darling, don't worry; I'll take care of you. Remember, you have nothing to fear as long as I'm with you. And I promise I will always be. This thing won't happen again. I'll watch over you. We'll go away and get married and start over."

Oh my darling, I thought, *my blessed darling, you'd take that chance with me!* "But the money," I quavered. "How can we get it back to the bank without—"

"I've been thinking about that," he said. "It can't be done. There must be several thousand dollars in that bag. There's no possible way to return it without its being traced. And why should you be caught and punished for a crime you didn't even know you were committing? I won't let them do that to you! Besides, it isn't necessary; banks are insured. It's no loss to them, and to us it's protection and a chance for life."

Together. Married. Leo watching over me, protecting me, even from myself! "But we can't keep it," I protested brokenly. "We can't!"

"And I can't let them lock you up!" Leo cried fiercely. "That's the alternative—a living death for you. And what about me? How can I go on living if—oh sweetheart, I want to take care of you. Don't you find the answer to everything in my arms?"

Yes, he had been the answer to me. A single girl in a big city, no family, few friends, a dismal job selling yarn and thread to fussy customers. He was my whole life. I couldn't be separated from him now.

■ WHEN HE LEFT that night he took with him my suit and hat to be burned in the incinerator at the hotel where he stayed. The money was to be left in the knitting bag, lying casually on the end table. I was to report for work as usual tomorrow, except that I would complain of illness, thus laying the groundwork for resigning a few days later. We would go away quietly and I would place my love and my safety in the hands of the man who would be my husband.

But that night, without the comfort of his presence, was torture. Raw nerves jumped at every footstep in the hall. I circled round and round the knitting bag, fighting an impulse to hide it, destroy it. The radio gave a complete account of the "daring daylight robbery by a lone girl bandit." I dialed from one newscast to another, hearing myself described as a "small, attractive brunette wearing a tailored suit and hat" . . . "soft-spoken, cool and iron-nerved." The getaway car came in for its share of publicity because of its unidentifiable license plates.

The man in the tweed suit had completely slipped my mind. I recalled him during the night and wondered if I should telephone Leo. But even if the stranger did connect me with the robbery, all he would be able to contribute was a description of me, and the police already had that

from the cashier. No, it was best to let well enough alone.

I was still wide-eyed and sleepless when the morning paper hit the door. I got up and took it in. The story was front-page news and the police reported "a promising development." The attendant at the Jefferson Street garage had identified the getaway car as one he had rented to a young woman who probably lived in the vicinity, since the attendant noted that she started north on Jefferson Street on foot. Police were making a thorough search of the neighborhood.

Closing in! They were already closing in! How long before some of my neighbors would recall that Eileen Markham fitted the description, even to the fact that she liked to knit and worked in the yarn department at the Bon Ton! Perhaps someone had even seen me returning yesterday. I'd taken no trouble to conceal myself!

Leo distrusted hotel switchboards and had a private line to his room. It took three tries before I got my trembling fingers in the right slots to dial him.

He answered sleepily, but alerted instantly at the bad news. "That means we'll have to speed up our plans. Don't talk any more over the phone. Get some breakfast and go to work. Be packed when I call for you at five-thirty."

"But I can't go to work! I'm too nervous and frightened!"

"Do as I tell you!" Then, softening, "Remember, I'm with you, all the way."

It was the hardest thing I ever did, forcing myself to lock that money in the apartment and go to work as usual. No need to plead illness; I looked such a wreck that Gladys, my assistant, was all for sending me home. I shook my head and said it was probably a cold and I wanted to stay and try to fight it off.

The day wore on interminably. A thousand times I imagined the police were searching my apartment. Leo had said the worst thing we could do was to try to hide the money. Getting panicky, acting suspiciously, was sure to give yourself away. But who would have thought that the garage man would be so observant? Oh, *why* hadn't I washed the car before I returned it? But then I remembered that I hadn't felt the slightest danger, almost as if I were working on a schedule that couldn't fail. Was that because I had shed my normal personality and assumed the other? But I must not let my mind dwell on that. For Leo's sake, if nothing else, I must remain calm.

By quarter of three I was exhausted, barely holding up until I could take my relief. Then Gladys came over to me. "I hate to bother you when you're feeling so punk, but there's a guy over there who's giving me a hard time. I wish the heck women wouldn't send their men in to try to match wool for them! I've hunted high and low and I can't find another ball of Number Three Green."

I said mechanically, "We're all out. I bought the last myself for a sweater. Tell him I've reordered and it should be in the first of next week."

She went away and I saw my relief coming and thankfully got my purse from under the counter. Then Gladys was back, her pretty face puckered with exasperation. "Seems he can't wait till next week. Now he wants a list of other stores that might carry that shade. I told him Nelson's and the Sewing Center, but he's been there. You got any suggestions?"

"I'll handle it," I said wearily. "Where is he?"

"Over by the pattern counter."

It must be that fatigue had dulled my sense of danger, for I walked right up to the tall man in the gray tweeds with an automatic, "May I help you?"

He turned, and lightning struck! He was the man in the bank. He was even holding the broken strand of lime green between his fingers, and he recognized me instantly. My blood turned to water. I stared at him, paralyzed.

He didn't waste words. "This is more luck than I bargained for," he said softly, "finding you in person instead of having to go through the addresses on sales slips. Where can we talk?"

Through mounting waves of nausea, I said, "You're a detective, I suppose. You've come to arrest me."

"Only an amateur one." He smiled. "Actually I'm a doctor. For the present, I only wish to ask you some questions."

A doctor? I could hear him telling the authorities: "Here's your criminal. Only she's a mental case. Should be committed before she does any more damage." *Oh Leo, what shall I do now?*

All at once my mind cleared. Maybe I could get out of this yet.

I said, "I was just about to go out for my rest period. Employees aren't supposed to leave the building, but there's a lounge on the mezzanine."

He nodded. "That will do."

"Just a moment while I check out." I went to the cash register, tore off a sheet from an order pad and scribbled, "Get rid of this moocher for me, will you?" I palmed the note, returned to the man and led the way to the elevators.

As we waited for a down car I felt him stealing glances at me. I stood stony-faced.

The elevator operator gave me a bright greeting and flicked a curious glance at my companion. The car, thank heaven, was almost full. As I stepped in, I slipped her the note. She would know what to do.

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Two passengers got out on the third floor and the operator took the opportunity to unfold my note. The car started down to the second. One last chance! I waited tensely as she sang out: "Second floor: ladies' ready-to-wear, millinery, lingerie. May I call your attention to our special one-day sale on foundation garments? Out on second, please."

There was a surge toward the door. She flashed her professional smile at the man in the car and said, "Passengers through, please." He had no alternative but to step out. As soon as he did, she shut the door and set the car in motion.

I got off in the basement and thanked her.

"Think nothing of it," she grinned.

When the elevator was on its way again, I took the fire stairs up and out onto the street. It was all I could do to walk instead of run to the cigar store, where there was a pay phone. What if Leo was out?

He wasn't, although it seemed hours before he took the call.

"Leo, something awful has happened. I've been recognized by a man who was in the—the place yesterday."

"*What?* Where are you now?"

"In a pay booth. I managed to ditch him but—oh Leo, what shall we do?"

"Go home," he said. "Take a taxi home and pick up the stuff. Don't bother with anything else. Get it and get out fast. Meet me here in twenty minutes."

"But I don't dare go home! He can get my address from the store. He's probably on his way there now with the police!"

"You've got to risk it!" Leo snapped. "And hurry!"

■ I TAXIED out to the apartment, told the driver to wait, ran upstairs and let myself in. Everything was exactly as I had left it.

I had the knitting bag in my hand and my hand on the doorknob when the door opened by itself. I stifled a scream as the man in tweeds stepped in and shut the door behind him. "I paid off your driver," he said. "You won't be needing him."

I backed away, clutching the bag. A blackmailer? I whispered, "What do you want?"

"I told you—I want to ask some questions. You're making it very difficult for me to help you, Miss Markham."

"I don't need help, and certainly not from you! Get out! Get out or I'll—"

"Call the police?" he finished sardonically. He took out a billfold and handed a card to me. "Dr. Gordon Thorpe, physician and surgeon," he said. "Offices 316 Medical-Dental Building. Satisfied?"

I said, "You didn't lose any time."

"I don't think there's any time to lose. You're in a very tight spot, Miss Markham. By the way, I got your name and address from your assistant. Told her that you were ill and I was taking you home. Does that convince you of my good intentions?"

Convinced of nothing but the necessity for getting away, I backed toward the window. If I could get it open and use the fire escape—but he got me first. His hand closed like a pair of pliers around my wrist and he flipped me into a chair and stood over me angrily. "Miss Markham, you're almost too much of a fool to be worth all my trouble. But I happen to know what you're suffering from and I happen to be interested enough to help you in spite of yourself. I could use considerably more cooperation than I've been getting, however."

Licking dry lips, I said, "All right, you win. What are you going to do with me?"

"That's better." He sat down on the arm of the davenport and lighted a cigarette. "First, I want you to know that you have nothing to fear from me. Quite the contrary. It happens, fortunately, that I've done a lot of work with veterans along the line of mental and emotional therapy. I thought during our encounter at the bank that I recognized certain familiar symptoms. It bothered me even before I read of the robbery. Afterward, I knew I must find you." He leaned forward, voice scalpel-sharp. "Who's responsible, Miss Markham? *Who placed you in that hypnotic trance?*"

I could only stare in stupid astonishment.

"You weren't acting under your own free will," he insisted. "Someone is using you. Some clever and unscrupulous person has made you a tool for his or her designs. Whom do you trust sufficiently to let him have that much influence over you?"

Leo? Leo knew nothing of the robbery until I sobbed out the whole story. To imagine him putting me into trances was absurd. Besides, wasn't it true that you couldn't hypnotize anyone into committing a crime unless he was already a criminal at heart?

The doctor said, "You think it's impossible because you think of hypnotism as a sort of vaudeville act. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Anyone can use hypnotism, especially if he has a docile subject, and, if he so desires, he can cause the subject to remember afterward what transpired during the trance."

I said, "If I was hypnotized, I can't be held responsible, can I?"

"Not if we can prove our case. There's a popular belief that a person can't be hypnotized into doing anything against his principles. It's a pretty touchy point, so we doctors who are working with hypnotism don't advertise the fact that it isn't entirely true. But I could prove it to the satisfaction of any jury."

"Jury?" I drew back.

"Yes, if it came to that. You see, I've been present at hypnotic experiments where the subject was told to throw acid in the face of his friend or plunge his bare arm into a cage of venomous snakes. In every case he would unhesitatingly try to obey the order!"

No, I thought, *I won't believe it! He's lying for some purpose of his own!* Perhaps he was trying to lull me into a false sense of security so that I would confess to the police. Or maybe it was part of a plan to get the money for himself. Either way, I had to get rid of him, and fast. Any moment Leo would be calling to find out what was delaying me. I must think, think, *think!*

The doctor stubbed out his cigarette and slanted me a look from under his dark brows. "I see that I've made no impression. You prefer not to believe me. Doubtless you have some other explanation for your actions?"

I had Leo's explanation and that was enough for me, but I said hastily, "Oh, yes, I do believe you. But we—we have no *proof,* have we, until we catch the—the other party?"

"Exactly." He stood up. "I want you to take me to him." He smiled sadly. "It *is* a 'him,' isn't it? And you were about to join him, hand over the money and live happily ever after—you *thought.*"

I still did, only the money wasn't important now. Let Dr. Thorpe do whatever he wanted with it. Leo and I could get along. The important thing was to get to him and get away.

I said, "I'll make a bargain with you. I'll lead you to him if I can have five minutes alone with him first. You see, we were going to be married." Real tears filled my eyes as I looked up at him. "You

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can go with me to the hotel and you can call the police. All I ask is a few minutes alone first, to—to say goodbye." *And to crawl into the dumb-waiter that leads to the basement incinerator.* The basement opened into the underground garage where Leo parked his coupe. "Here," I held out the knitting bag, "you can keep the money as proof that I'm not up to any tricks."

With a faint smile he took the bag and dropped it onto the davenport. "Certainly, Miss Markham, go right ahead. Take all the time you want with him. I'll wait for you here. You may even borrow my car. Because you'll be back."

Fists clenched, I faced those ironical eyes. "You think you've got it all figured out. don't you?"

He shrugged. "It's obvious, I'm afraid. You won't be running away with your lover—not when he finds out that the money's out of his reach."

I hated this man as I'd never hated anyone before! Suddenly the phone shrilled. I made no move.

"Not going to answer it?" inquired the doctor pleasantly. "And a moment ago you were so sure of yourself! Afraid now to put him to the test?"

Stiffly I got up and picked up the phone. "Hello?" I listened, aware of the doctor, aware of his smile. Then I said calmly, "Yes, darling, I know, but I couldn't help it. No, nothing's wrong. I'll be right over." I replaced the phone.

The doctor lit a cigarette and blew smoke at the ceiling.

I said, "I'll leave your car in front of the Carlton Hotel. Unless," I added contemptuously, "you're afraid this monster I'm in love with will hypnotize me into stealing it, too."

He looked at me seriously. "Not a chance. Whether you realize it or not, you're fortified against him now. His power's broken. He can never again get control over your unconscious mind. Because, you see, you don't trust him any more."

"Very interesting. Thanks for the lecture." At the door I paused curiously. "How are you going to explain to the police that you let me get away?" Then, sarcastically, "Oh, I forgot; you won't have to because I'll be back!" I actually smiled. "You can't be much of a doctor, Dr. Thorpe. You take too many chances."

"Less than you're taking. Be careful. My car's the green convertible parked across the street. Sometimes the starter sticks."

I slammed the door, ran downstairs and across the street, churning with anger. I was behind the wheel and had the ignition on before I remembered that I had no license and I was afraid to drive! *But you did drive when you were "Mary Thatcher,"* I thought. *If she could do it, you can do it.* Angrily I stepped on the starter and shifted into first. *I'll show you, Dr. Thorpe. You'll see who'll be holding the bag!* The car lurched forward, scraped along the curb and wavered out into traffic.

I parked clumsily across from the Carlton, tossed the car keys into the glove compartment and raced across the street. It was awful, the whole thing. A living nightmare. If I didn't get back to reality soon, I'd fly apart.

Leo was waiting in the lobby, a suitcase and a ring of half-smoked cigarette stubs at his feet. The sight of his dear worried face was the best thing that had happened to me in the past twenty-four hours.

"Eileen, for the love of heaven, what kept you?" And, quickly, "Where's the bag?"

We don't need the money, darling. We've got each other. Take me away, as you promised. That's what I had intended to say. Instead, it came out, "Leo, I've changed my mind. I want to give myself up."

He whitened. "Have you gone crazy? You know what they'll do to you!"

I did know and I didn't care. Let the psychiatrists examine me. Let them find that I was a mental case. I didn't care what happened after that, just so long as my faith in him was justified.

"Leo, darling," I said, "please don't argue. There's no time to explain now. But my mind's made up. It's the only right thing to do."

He saw I meant it. He said slowly, "What about the money? If you're going to make a confession, you'll have to produce the evidence."

"It's all right; it's safe. I left it home. They can get it any time." I clung to him, shivering. "Oh darling, don't let's waste time. Take me to the police and let me get this awful burden off my mind."

He dropped his cigarette and rubbed it out, very slowly, with his heel. "All right, Eileen. We'll get the car."

In the garage I clung to his arm while we waited for the attendant to bring the coupe. Leo patted my hand, his eyes remote, thinking. I was thinking too—of a dark, sardonic face. Thinking grindingly over and over: *You're wrong, Doctor. He does love me. You're wrong.*

Leo threw his suitcase in the trunk and we climbed in. I sat close to him and leaned my head on his shoulder and closed my eyes. Soon, soon now, everything would be all right. . . .

I opened my eyes. The coupe was doing fifty, heading for the outskirts of town. I sat up. "Leo, this isn't the way to the police station!"

"I know. I want to drive a little, try to

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talk some sense into you." His mouth was set in a sullen line.

A small chill moved through me. I said, "There's nothing to talk about. I committed a crime."

He made no comment. The speedometer hit fifty-five and, as we passed the city limits, went up to sixty.

"Darling," I said, my voice pitched high, "I know this is hard on you, but it's best. It will all work out somehow. And we could never have been happy on stolen money. We were mad to think of it."

The speedometer settled at seventy.

Tires squealed as we turned off the highway and into a rutted lane. A leafy tunnel overhead, tall bushes on either side. The car skidded to a sudden halt. Leo killed the engine and turned and looked at me. "I always have taken life into my own hands," he said softly. "Didn't you know that, Eileen? You must have felt the master in me, because you were willing enough to obey."

So it was true, and somehow I was not surprised. I felt nothing, thought nothing. Then his hand touched the back of my neck.

"Remember?" he murmured, beginning the delicate manipulation that was so soothing, and so effective.

But not this time. No, not ever again. *"His power is broken. You don't trust him any more."* I should have been terrified, kicking and screaming. Maybe I would, later, when the final moment came. But now I felt only a numb and melancholy curiosity. "But why, Leo? You had so much to be good for."

"Yes? What, for instance? A two-bit job with no future—is that good?"

"Then, why *me*? There must have been other girls, prettier, more useful. You didn't have to pick on me."

"But you were so eager, honey." *The softness of his voice, the rhythm of his moving hand.* "So lonesome, so full of romantic notions, such a little pushover. I started studying hypnotism at first just on the chance that it might help my salesmanship. Then I met you, and it was easy. So easy that I got the big idea." He gave a throaty chuckle. "Why, all I had to do was drop my voice a couple of notes and you got glassy-eyed."

Sure. Almost too much of a fool to be worth saving, the doctor had said. Well, I wouldn't *be* saved. Leo was going to kill me. It was all he could do now. The hand that moved caressingly on the back of my neck would soon be gripped around my throat.

I said, "You can stop now. I'm not quite the fool that I was."

"No?" The hand stilled but remained where it was.

"No. Those little lapses of memory were your doing, weren't they? You caused them and you cured them. You wanted to get me worried enough to accept your fantastic explanation about a split personality. But just for the record, Leo, wouldn't it have been simpler not to have me remember anything about the robbery at all? You would have got the money just the same and I would have kept my peace of mind."

Leo's laugh was a child's gurgle of delight. He was pleased to explain, to show off his diabolical cleverness. "Angel, peace of mind was no part of my plans for you. I needed you completely dependent on me, frightened, believing that I was your only salvation. I wanted you in so deep that you'd never dare get out."

It would have worked too, if it hadn't been for the doctor. *The doctor!* Suddenly, almost joyously, I saw where I could extract a single moment of pleasure from this agony. I was going to strike back where it would hurt the most! "Leo, you've lost out. You don't know it yet, but you're finished. Remember the man at the bank, the one I told you came to the store and recognized me? Well, it wasn't just coincidence. He's a doctor and he's got you figured out."

"What?" The fingers tightened on my neck. "What are you talking about?"

"Dr. Gordon Thorpe. He's worked with veterans to cure them by hypnotic suggestion. That's how he guessed about me; he recognized the trance symptoms. And do you know where he is now, Leo? In my apartment, waiting for you to come back and collect the money!"

"You're lying!" Finger and thumb crept around my throat. "You've made it up, you little——!"

The obscenity almost made me smile. "See for yourself. Kill me and go back for the money. That's your plan, isn't it, Leo? Well, go ahead, walk right into a trap. Me, I'm going to die laughing!"

"You!" It broke from his lips in a frustrated scream. "You're lying, but I'll kill you anyway, you stupid little—"

Both his hands closed around my throat and a burst of pain exploded behind my eyes. Now indeed I was writhing and kicking and clawing at the crushing hands. Through a reddening mist I saw the ghastly grin on Leo's face. Then I was flung violently forward and knew no more.

■ I OPENED my eyes and saw the fender of a car. A pair of hands was at my throat. With feeble horror I attempted to push them away.

"Lie still," a familiar voice commanded. "Take a sip of this." The cool mouth of a flask touched my lips. Behind it was the anxious face of Dr. Thorpe. I swallowed and coughed. He held me upright against his shoulder. A question formed in my injured throat.

"Don't try to talk until the muscles have relaxed," he said. "I followed you. Did you think I'd leave you alone with a maniac?" His face darkened. "I missed the turn-in the first time, or I could have prevented this."

Fear returned and I struggled to speak, to sit up.

"No." He held me firmly. "Don't look. I didn't think he'd park so close to the highway. I turned in fast and rammed the coupe. His head went through the windshield."

I turned my face to his shoulder and wept. . . .

Dr. Thorpe took me to the district attorney to tell my story and I agreed to submit for a final time to hypnosis. Later he told me what had happened. He had commanded me to jump out the tenth-story window. In calm and confidence I had moved to obey and it had taken the combined strength of three men to hold me until he could bring me out of it. Afterward there was some discussion about its being "inconclusive"—I might have had a tendency toward suicide in the first place. True enough. Just as I, or anyone, might sometime be tempted to rob, but normally we curb the temptation. And that's what counts.

No charge was brought against me. The money was returned to the bank, a trumped up story offered to the newspapers, and the public has long forgotten the incident.

But I will never forget, for strange and heartbreaking situations are always arising in my work of organizing social and recreational clubs for working girls. I feel that I can meet these problems with more understanding because of what happened to me. Besides, I have the help of a wonderful man who will some day be my husband—Dr. Gordon Thorpe. *The End*

 all right," he answered. "It's nothing serious."

About that time a little boy and girl came up to Angie and looked her over silently. Apparently she passed their inspection, for they asked her to play with them. That left Joe and me on the bench together.

By the time Angie's playmates went home and she returned to us, I knew quite a lot about him. I knew that he had been on the police force for several years, that he had served overseas with the Army. I knew that he adored his little daughter. I knew he was ambitious; he was studying law in his spare time. "I kind of figure this country needs a few hardheaded, conscientious men in politics," he told me. "Besides, when a man has a family, he wants to do all he can for them."

Some men, I thought, and I wondered how Hank was making out as clerk in his father's store.

Before they left me, Joe told me that Angie was having a birthday on Sunday. He wondered if I would meet him the next day and help him select a dress for her. "I'm not good at all this girl stuff," he said, "but I thought she ought to have something real fancy. How about meeting me at the Hathaway Shop at ten?"

I promised him I would.

■ JOE PICKED OUT a fussy little dress at a price that left me breathless. "Don't look like that, Bonnie," he said. "I know it cost too much but the kid only has a birthday once a year." He dropped a couple of bills on the counter and a strange, rather sick look came into his face. "It's a funny thing. About this time every year I get a feeling that I—well, I owe it to the kid."

"I think she'd be just as happy in something less expensive."

He didn't hear me. He was staring down at the display of little dresses. The salesgirl came back with his change and the package. She spoke to him twice before he knew she had returned.

I tried to pretend I hadn't noticed his preoccupation. "All those little dresses are very pretty," I said, "and beautifully made. But what prices!" I glanced at the salesgirl. "I could take a yard and a half of material and a few yards of lace and make any one of them."

We were out in the street before Joe answered. "What were you saying just now, Bonnie?" he asked. "Something about making those dresses."

"Well, I could," I told him.

"Say," he exclaimed, "maybe that's what you should do. I mean it! Make dresses for little girls!"

"It would be very impractical," I told him.

In spite of that, I played around with the idea. I even went so far as to draw a sketch of a little dress I'd like to make. And then one Saturday afternoon when I had nothing else to do I wandered into a department store to look over materials. I found a lovely piece which would so suit the dress I'd designed that before I realized it I found myself with a yard and a half of material and on the way to the lace counter.

I've always loved to sew. At home I'd made all my own things, even my suits and coats, and I'd dreamed of the day when I would have a daughter of my own to sew for.

How I had wanted that daughter! Now, as the first flush of enthusiasm wore off, I found my fingers beginning to lag. This dress was for a little girl I would never know. It was impossible to stitch love in with every flash of the needle.

At just that inopportune moment I got a letter from Mom. She wrote that she had met Hank and Stella on the street. They had the baby with them. She looked exactly like Hank.

I wanted to fold the little dress and drop it in a drawer. Instead, I worked at it again with new determination. I had wasted weeks on self-pity. Was I always going to be the woman to start things and leave them unfinished?

By that Saturday it was done, pressed and stuffed with folds of white tissue. I decided to show it to the buyer at the Hathaway Shop.

She unfolded it and examined it inside and out. "It's an exquisite piece of work," she said. "I'd like very much to show it to our production manager."

She took me with her to see Mrs. Allison, the manager, who promptly offered me a job in her department. I would start as a seamstress, with a very good chance for advancement in the shop.

I walked out of the office with my head in pink clouds. Of course I felt that Joe Bush deserved to hear my good news, so I walked all over the neighborhood until I met him.

"Why, Bonnie!" he exclaimed when he saw me. "What's happened to you?" When I told him about my new job his white teeth flashed. "That's the best news I've heard lately," he said, "but I knew something good was bound to happen to you soon."

■ WITHIN a few short weeks I became so absorbed in all the intricacies of making little girls' clothes that I forgot poor Bonnie Redmond, the girl nobody loved. I got to know the fabric market, and just where Hathaway's purchased the right materials at the best prices. I enrolled in a school of design and worked on sketches at night. I became a very busy girl.

Strangely, now that I was hard at work and interested in life again, new avenues were being opened up to me. There was Harriet Graham, another girl in my department, who seemed to like me from the day I started with Hathaway's. We frequently had dinner together or went to the theater. One evening she invited me up to her apartment and I met her brother Al.

The three of us had a wonderful time that winter. Now that I was no longer tense and miserable inside, I found that I was doing all the things I'd thought I couldn't do and really enjoying them. Al was a wonderful dancer and, almost before I knew it, I was dancing as though I had been born with wings on my feet. And I even learned to bowl.

At Christmas I selected one of our loveliest little dresses and did it up in a very fussy package for Angela Bush. I put on my new red coat and fur-topped boots and walked eight blocks through the snow until I met her father. "This is for Angie," I told him, "and tell her I wish her a very merry Christmas." I added, "You know, I feel a bit like you. I think I owe Angie something. I think I owe her a lot."

"You're happy, aren't you, Bonnie?" he asked slowly. "Well, I'm glad. I'm glad you're doing so well."

I smiled and then I hurried away, but at the corner I turned to wave to him. He was still standing in the snow where I had left him, the box held against his blue uniform. . . .

One January night, Al Graham followed me into my apartment and put his arms around me and kissed me. It was with a little shock that I realized he was in love with me.

The next week end I was invited out

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to their mother's house. I made some excuse not to go until Saturday morning. Al was so nice that I didn't want him to guess I was postponing the moment when a winter week end in the country and his family's approval would furnish just the right romantic setting. For I had a feeling that he was going to ask me to marry him.

I realized that I should be happy about it. He could give me so much I had missed—a home, the children I wanted. And I wasn't in love with Hank any longer, was I? Then why was it that, even though I knew Al Graham's wife would be a very fortunate girl, I had the feeling that I wanted to cry as I had not cried in months?

I decided I needed to talk with someone, someone whose opinion I valued. So, in the evening, I went out and walked up to the park, and after a time Joe came strolling along under the trees. His grin spread over his face. "Gosh, it's good to see you!"

"All right if I walk along with you?" I asked.

By the time we had walked around the circle and down by the river, I had told him how my job was going and a little about Al. I didn't say there was anything serious between us. I don't know why. "So you see, you were right," I ended. "It did work out. I guess I have just about everything a girl could want. Everything . . . almost." My voice trailed off. My eyes turned to the river, where the night shadows were gathering. And above an awful lump in my throat came a voice I hardly recognized as mine. "These things happen to us and we have to go on living, don't we? Well, that's what I'm going to do. I won't be a quitter again. I'll try very hard to be as happy as I can."

I felt his eyes on my face. "Sometimes it isn't easy," he murmured, "but we must take what life gives us and make the most of it."

I whirled around and faced him. The words were torn from my lips. "But nothing takes the place of love! Nothing!"

"No," he said grimly. "Nothing takes the place of love."

I managed a laugh. It sounded harsh and brittle, for it was full of bitterness. "How would you know?" I demanded. "Just how would a man like you know what it's like to be alone and not have anyone care, anyone who mattered?"

"Do you really want to know?" he asked harshly. "Do you really believe that other people don't have troubles too? I'll tell you how I know.

"I was in Italy during the war. I was scared half to death. Oh, I don't mean for myself. I was scared for Madge, my wife. She had never been very strong and she was going to have a baby.

"I kept waiting for a letter. Finally I got it. My mother wrote that I had a fine healthy daughter. Madge was dead."

"Angie's mother?" I gasped. "But she talks about her mother all the time!"

"My mother. The only mother the poor kid's ever known. Madge and I had been happy. Very happy. But she had to go through all that, and I couldn't be with her. I couldn't even say goodbye.

"After I got that letter, I went a little crazy. I thought I didn't care what happened to me. Let the snipers get me. Every time they called for volunteers for some tough assignment I wanted to go. I took a lot of crazy chances. I thought I wanted to be with Madge. You know what happened? I came back without a scratch.

"I didn't go home when I got out. Sure, I saw my mother. I called her and had lunch with her downtown. 'What's the matter, Joe?' she said. 'Aren't you coming home? Don't you want to see your baby?' I let her have it straight. No, I didn't

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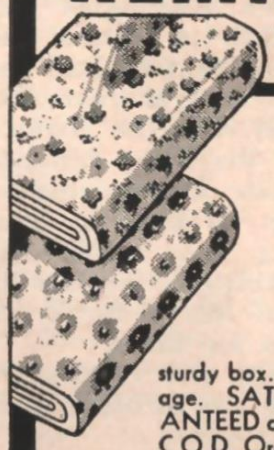

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want to see the kid. I told her I thought the best thing she could do was find a good home for her. I'd foot the bill. She just sat and the tears ran down her cheeks. 'It's not the baby's fault,' she kept saying. 'It's not the baby's fault her mother's dead.'

"A few days later I ran into Mother on the street. Her head was up and her chin was thrust out and there was a look in her eyes—well, like she used to get when she was going to use the slipper on me. She marched right up to me and said, 'Joe Bush, I want you to meet your daughter. And if you're half the man you were a soldier, you'll make a good dad for her,' and with that she plopped this fat baby girl in my arms.

"Well, Bonnie, that did it. Angie was wearing one of those little pink bonnets baby girls wear and there were a lot of brown curls sticking out from under it. She looked up at me with big brown eyes —she's got eyes like Madge's—as though she wasn't sure whether to smile or not. Then she spit out a mouthful of milk on my new uniform." He grinned. "We've been friends ever since.

"I told myself then that maybe that was why I got back safe. Because Angie needed a father." He stopped and looked at me. "Now I'm not so sure that was all, not since that evening you came running down the street to tell me about your new job. You—you've changed so. You're so alive. You kind of glow." His eyes searched my face. "You've become a very lovely girl, Bonnie," he murmured. "Very desirable."

I felt the quiver of the pulse in my throat.

His slow grin spread. "Funny, isn't it? I didn't intend for it to be like that. You looked like just 125 pounds of trouble to me. But then that day before Christmas—you stood there in the snow, that red thing on, and—oh Bonnie, do you think you could ever love a big lug like me?"

I went into his arms. I could hear the thumping of his heart against my cheek. "Oh Joe, Joe!" I cried. "You're all I need to make it perfect! You and Angie!"

He kissed me. "Perfect for both of us from now on. Like you say," he added with a grin, "nothing takes the place of love."

The End

LET HER CHOOSE HER OWN FUTURE
(*Continued from page 65*) own personal ambitions, his parents are creating not only a maladjusted child but one who is bound to be a failure in the very career they're mapping out for him. No one can be successful in work to which he is unsuited or which he fundamentally dislikes.

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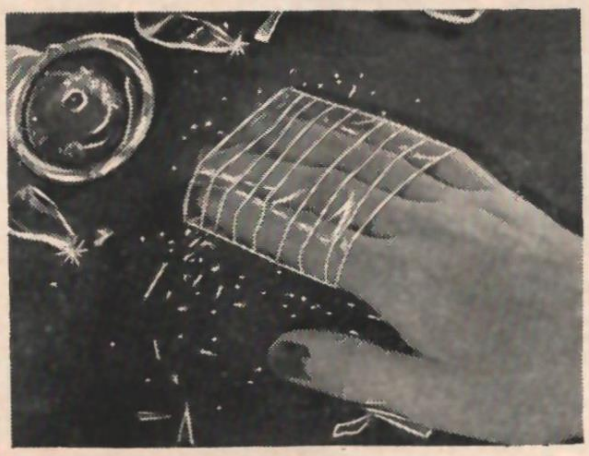

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who pamper and overindulge their children because their own lives were so hard and severe.

Or take the case of the Prices. Mrs. Price was told that little Amy had a good sense of rhythm, so Amy was studying the ballet, being dragged to ballet performances and made to mimic contemporary Pavlovas. Recently she started to stutter. A doctor told Mrs. Price that Amy was overstimulated, had been made insecure as a result of being in such cultural deep water.

If your child shows talent along certain lines, you should try to help her develop that talent. But if, at a certain point, her interest flags, don't force her on just because you'd like the reflected glory of her glamorous career. Stop and ask yourself some questions. Do her teachers think she's talented? Why has her interest suddenly waned? Is she bored? Try to be objective, and that means leave yourself and your ambitions for your child out of the picture.

It is a wise parent who can see a child as a separate entity. The more you grant her that, the happier she will be. Help her fulfill herself, not you.

Therein will lie her greatest success—and yours.

The End

ONE KISS FOR PAY (*Continued from page 37*) Denis' blue eyes seemed to be close to me all the time and I half expected to look up and see him pushing a stubborn lock of curly brown hair back from his forehead.

At school the next day we had our first class meeting. It was a lot of fun, going to the meeting and voting, although I didn't put a word into the discussion. When someone suggested that we go on a hayride, I was all for it. I had never been on a hayride. What would the kids wear? Where would they go?

When I started to leave the study hall, Denis grabbed my arm and we walked down the hall together with Denis guiding me in that masterful way of his.

"I guess you know who's taking you to the hayride," he said when we stopped at his locker. My heart beat so fast that I was afraid he could see the happiness in my eyes. I'd never had a real date before, never anything but Denis walking to the archway with me the last three weeks, and holding my hand sometimes in study hall when no one was looking.

I raised my eyes and started to answer, but fear choked back my reply. What if Denis expected to take me home after the hayride? What if he saw where I lived? I saw the questioning look in his eyes, and finally burst out, "Oh Denis, maybe I can't go!"

Bitterly I fought to keep the tears from showing as I felt his hand tighten on mine. "You're getting too far ahead, Betsy. It's three weeks away. You'll have plenty of time to find out whether or not you can go."

I nodded, but inside me I knew the answer would have to be no.

■ IT WASN'T until the day of the hayride that I realized how unfair it had been not to tell him for sure that I wasn't going, but I had wanted so terribly for him to like me that I hadn't dared. That afternoon in study hall, he asked me, "You're coming tonight, aren't you, Betsy?"

I bit my lip, holding back the tremor in my voice. "No, Denis, I can't go. I can't!" Hot tears flooded my eyes.

A couple of tiny lines appeared on his forehead. "Then I won't go," he said matter-of-factly.

"But you must," I urged. "You can't miss it because of me."

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Then I realized what I had done. Denis wouldn't have walked with me, called me his girl, if he had known I couldn't go. No boy wanted to hold hands in study hall with a girl who would let him down when it came to going to parties and school activities.

The bell rang and study period was over. Grabbing my books, I choked back the tears and ran down the hall ahead of him, not daring to look back and let him see my face. I darted into the girls' room and stayed there until I saw him walking down alone to catch the Rumley Hills bus.

I hated to have anyone see me go home that afternoon. I avoided Ina, because my eyes were swollen and red and my voice was low and trembly.

That night, more than ever before, the house and its dank smell of dirty clothes and stale beer was suffocating. Mom had already gone to work at Rosie's Garden where she was a waitress and a cold greasy egg was still on her breakfast plate. On the bed, the dress she had worn after work the night before lay in a wilted heap, the inside of the neckline caked with powder and the front spotted with smelly perfume.

I picked up the dress, swept the floor and put away her shoes. When I had finished cleaning inside, I took the broom outside and worked furiously on the yard. I swept up the beer cans and the broken glass, heaping them into a box that had blown over from Slyfer's Store next door.

Just as it was getting dark, I looked up and saw Ina coming down the street. "Wha'cha beatin' your brains out about?" she asked as she stopped at the fence. "You're wastin' your time, you know."

"I guess so," I agreed. The first big puff of wind from the river would bring a whirlwind of papers and junk, to say nothing of the smell from the stockyards.

"Come on down to the store and I'll buy you a Coke," she suggested.

I was lonesome, and staying home thinking of Denis and the hayride wouldn't help. Yet I hesitated. There was something about Ina that I didn't like. I couldn't really put my finger on it, but it was there. Maybe it was the deliberate way she looked at me, as if she were measuring me for something. But I couldn't afford to be choosy.

"I'll come over as soon as I wash my hands," I said.

Afterward I took the forty-five cents out of the chili powder can on the kitchen shelf and went on over to Slyfer's. I had to get sausage and milk anyway. Bucky would be home from work later and he'd want something to eat and a cup of strong coffee.

Ina was leaning against a packing case, drinking her Coke, when I got to the store. Maybe Gus had been whispering a joke to her because his face was ruddier than usual. Ina was giggling and nodding to him as he went back to the cash register.

While the next busload of packing house workers came in and bought pinto beans to go with the sow belly they had brought home with them, Ina and I finished our Cokes. We stood there until the last customer in the store had picked out a sack of flour and had carried it out on his shoulder. Then Ina nodded to me and we walked to the cash register. Just as she started to put the dime down beside the register, Gus reached under the counter and brought out a Cellophane package with nylons in it.

Ina smiled and pretended to be surprised, or so I thought, but Gus handed her the flat little package as if he had done it before.

Then we went out.

I didn't ask her why he had given her the hose, but after we were outside she mentioned that Gus liked her, and that a girl as pretty as I was didn't have to wear

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bobby socks and old clothes unless she wanted to.

I didn't see much of Ina for the next few days. All my time at home I spent polishing my shoes, rolling up my hair or washing my sweaters over and over again, trying to make them look fluffy and fresh like those the other girls wore.

■ IT WAS Tuesday, only three weeks before Halloween when we had our class meeting to make plans for the Halloween carnival. I kept still as usual during the meeting, but I was terribly thrilled when Denis suggested that I help run the candy booth our class was sponsoring.

"Let's all get red skirts and white sweaters just alike," suggested Sue Coleman, "and trim the booth like a stick of striped candy."

Everybody liked Sue's idea, and I guess it didn't occur to anyone that it might be hard for some of us to buy a special outfit for the occasion.

"You'll look swell in the white sweater." Denis grinned as we walked down to the bus that afternoon. "Just what you need with your hair." He squeezed my hand and I went all shivery, seeing the sparks glow in his sky-blue eyes. "You could be the prettiest girl in school if—"

He stopped abruptly, and my eyes ran down to my scuffed loafers. I know he didn't mean it that way, but my heart shrank within me. If I had clothes, he had meant.

He tipped my chin up, looked into my eyes as we sat under the archway, our usual spot. "Betsy, you look pretty to me anyway. You're my girl you know."

I nodded mutely, forgivingly. Denis hadn't meant to hurt me. He had merely wanted to tell me that he thought I was pretty but the words had slipped out so awkwardly.

I can't let him down this time, I thought. *I have to go to the carnival.* Maybe if I worked in the candy booth he would come and take me out to the seat under the archway and would put his arms around me. Maybe he'd kiss me. It would be something to look forward to.

I didn't tell Mom about the sweater and skirt that day; it had to be a special time and I could tell she was in a bad humor. So it was on Thursday when I got home from school and found her sitting in the bedroom cleaning out an old trunk that I decided to tell her.

She looked different than usual, without any make-up on to make her look garish and cheap. I wondered how she had looked when she was younger. Pretty, I decided.

She turned around and saw me. "Get out of here and quit sneaking up on me!" she shouted, flying into one of her terrible rages.

"But Mom, I wasn't sneaking up," I protested, attempting to explain.

She wouldn't listen and yelled even louder when I kept trying to talk to her. A few minutes later when Bucky came home she was still screaming at me, making it almost impossible for me to tell him what it was all about.

"Oh, come on, Helen," he argued, when she finally began to cool off. He put his hand on her shoulder but she twisted away.

Turning to me, he promised, "Betsy, I'll put all the extra money I get for the next few days in the can on the kitchen shelf, and we'll try to get enough to buy the skirt and sweater before the carnival."

I had a warm feeling of affection for big, clumsy Bucky, who was homely and who could hardly read his name, but who remembered what it was like to want new things when you were young.

After that, when Bucky brought Mom

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home from work, he'd drop the coins in the can and on Wednesday morning, only two days before the carnival, there was almost ten dollars in it.

I told Ina about the money Wednesday afternoon on the way home from school, the afternoon I went home and found the empty can on the floor and Mom lying across the bed, smelling like the empty beer bottles on the table and breathing heavily in a sickening stupor.

When I saw her, bitterness swelled up inside me in huge lumps. I threw my notebook on the table and went outside.

I walked aimlessly for fifteen or twenty minutes, until I realized I was in front of Ina's house. Without realizing why, I turned and walked up the path to the gloomy unpainted house.

"Look who's come," Ina greeted me from the front room where she was reading a magazine. "What is it, kid? You look like you've lost your last friend."

I hadn't meant to tell her about Mom and the money, but somehow the words tumbled out.

"I learned a long time ago not to leave any money lying around this joint," Ina said when I had finished. "It's my old man here who can't leave the bottle alone."

She got me a chair from the kitchen and I sat down. She took a package of cigarettes from her pocket. "But you don't have to give up, Betsy. You can still have the sweater and the skirt for Friday night. And you can have taxi money to come home on too, if you need it."

"What do you mean, Ina?"

"Don't tell me you're that dumb!" She laughed shrilly. "I've seen the way Gus Slyfer looks at you. Just let him know that you'll meet him at the Golden Thistle and he'll give you anything you want. He's a pushover for young girls. It sorta seems to make him feel young again. Of course he'll want to be seen with you, but there's nothing wrong in making a man happy when it costs you nothing. Gus just makes like a man. He's really a sheep in wolf's clothing. Underneath, he doesn't dare."

I didn't know exactly what Ina meant. I only realized she was trying to tell me I wouldn't have to pay, the way some girls had to pay; that if I met Gus as she wanted me to I could go to the carnival where Denis would be. *Denis, Denis, Denis,* I thought. *Maybe he will kiss me.*

■ I WAITED until almost closing time before going to Slyfer's. I had worn my best sweater, a pink one Aunt René had given me, and my gray skirt.

When I went into the store, old Granny Manus was picking over the potatoes and sneering as she threw the rotten ones aside, so I stood around nervously killing time. Finally I got up nerve enough to ask Gus if I could use his telephone.

Quietly I went into the cell-like back room and leaned against the stack of packing cases, slowly lifted the receiver and dialed Ina's number. Just as she answered, Gus' step sounded behind me and I saw his hand reach up and flip the light switch, leaving the storeroom in darkness. I couldn't see him at all, but I felt his hot breath on my neck as I stammered into the phone.

"Yes, I know. The Golden Thistle's a good place," I lied. What did I know about the Golden Thistle? I had never been there. "But who'll bring me home?"

I felt Gus' arm around my waist, and his hand creep up. "I will," he said.

Desperately I wanted to drop the receiver and scream, but Ina's words rang in my ear: "You don't have to be afraid."

"My little Betsy." His lips brushed against my neck.

I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to

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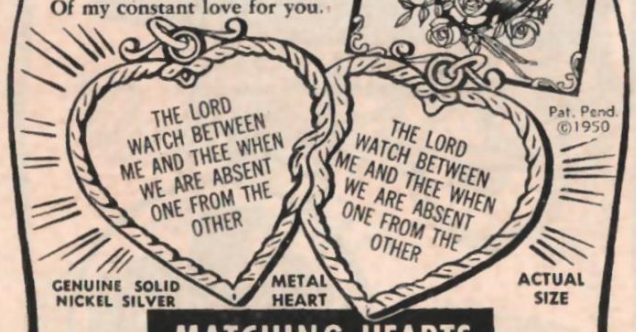
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get away. "Okay," I whispered hurriedly, as I slid my foot into the screen door that opened on the alley. Then I was racing madly across the alley toward home.

■ I TRIED TO EAT a sandwich that night while I waited to go to the Golden Thistle, but the bread stuck in my throat. All I could see was Gus Slyfer's face looking smug and satisfied, his fingers reaching for me as they reached for money at the store and his eyes, shifty and red, going slowly over me.

At a quarter of nine I was at the Golden Thistle, trying to keep from trembling with fright. The Coke I attempted to drink seemed to be strangling me.

Suddenly the music from the juke box blared and I jumped. *Maybe I should go now,* I thought. But it was too late for that. Gus was already walking back to the booth, his face freshly shaven and his dark hair shining.

As we climbed the musty stairs of the rooming house near the Golden Thistle, the room that Ina had told me Gus would take me to, I kept remembering Ina's words: "Gus only pretends. He may paw over you a little, but that's all. I know, don't I?"

But still, a vague fear crept up inside me. I shuddered with a strange frightened hollowness, in spite of Ina's reassurances. Even as I fought my nameless fear, I recoiled as Gus' eyes slowly swept up and down my body.

I remembered the clean warmth of Denis' strong young hand holding mine, and I desperately wanted to turn back.

Gus had sat down on a creaky chair by then, and for a sudden moment the hollowness seemed to subside. I remembered Ina's instructions. Pretend to need some matches, but Gus had his lighter out of his pocket before I could reach for my purse. Pretend to hunt for a pin, but before I could turn to the dresser Gus was pulling me toward him, his flabby, hot hand on my arm.

"Come here, Betsy," his voice urged. "You don't have to be afraid of me," he boasted. "No girl has to be afraid of me."

His arms closed around me and he pulled me down on his lap. His soft face pressed sickeningly against mine. I stiffened as his lips quivered against the line of my neck, my chin. Inside me, the lump of fear thickened and I couldn't swallow.

He's a horrid old man, I thought, and a terrible feeling of revulsion, of degradation flowed through me.

I knew I couldn't go through with it, knew I couldn't stand his moist, hot arms around me, his lips searching for mine.

It made no difference if he didn't ask more. Selling part of myself was just as wrong as going the whole way. I could see it clearly now; it was wrong, wrong, wrong!

Suddenly, I tried to move, to pull away from him, but his arms came round my neck like a vice. I said a little prayer and pushed away with all the strength I had. Gus, startled, relaxed a little, and I jerked away and ran for the door.

Ina stood at the top of the stairway as I flung the door open and rushed down the musty, dark hallway. "Where are you going, you little fool?" she jeered. "There's a little matter of paying me you haven't thought of." Her high, shrill voice followed me down the rickety steps, into the darkness, but I couldn't stop. I had to get away from the suffocating shame of the little room.

Any other time I would have been afraid to be alone near the Golden Thistle at night. But tonight the lights inside seemed to offer protection.

I opened the door, and there, standing out against the twinkling lights of the juke box, was Denis, with a strange look of unbelief in his eyes as I stepped inside.

"Denis!" I cried, clutching his arm.

He drew back, a look of contempt spread slowly over his face. "What are you doing here?"

There was no use explaining—Denis would never want me for his girl again—but I had to. "You don't have to listen to me," I told him, "but I have to tell somebody."

We slipped into a booth and I sobbed out the whole story. As he listened, his hand slowly crept across the scarred table and covered mine.

"Now I know it was wrong, Denis," I told him. "I know it, I know it! But I wanted to get the skirt and sweater for you. I wanted to dress up so you'd be proud of me. I didn't want you to see where I live—on the Row."

"Come on, Betsy," he interrupted, but the angry hurt lines had slipped away.

All at once, it struck me. Why was Denis at the Golden Thistle in the first place?

"I was looking for you," he answered my unspoken question, "to tell you that the girls aren't going to wear red skirts and white sweaters after all. It was announced at school this afternoon, but you ran off before study period was over so you didn't hear the announcement."

"But how did you know where to find me?" I stammered.

"That's easy," he grinned. "There's a file in the office with the names and addresses of everybody at school. I've known for weeks where you live."

"Oh Denis, and you didn't mind?" I asked.

Both his hands were across the table now and his blue eyes were bright. "Of course I didn't mind."

"And you wouldn't have minded if I hadn't had the skirt and the sweater like the rest?"

His hand tightened on mine. "You're you, aren't you, Betsy? The same Betsy in a green or brown or red skirt. Some day you'll have nice things. Miss Yates says you're going to be able to get a good job when you're out of school because you're particular about your work, and you're neat, too."

By that time, the neon lights of the Golden Thistle were behind us and we were walking hand in hand toward home. When Denis lifted my chin and kissed me, that sweet tender first kiss, I knew that his faith had made me see the Row not as a place to end my hopes, but as a street with a new beginning. *The End*

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